A DIALOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE ARCHITECTONICS OF DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACE AT BARKING TOWN SQUARE

by

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Thesis submitted to the Bartlett School of Architecture
in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
PhD in Architectural History and Theory

2013

University College London, London

I, Thomas-Bernard Kenniff, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

11 July 2013

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an exploration of identity, public space and design in the town of Barking, London England, where a new Town Square was produced between 2000 and 2010. Designed by muf architecture/art (public realm) and Alford Hall Monaghan Morris Architects (buildings), the Barking Town Square, as will be seen in this research, is a telling moment of urban and public space development of its period. Consequently, the project raises significant questions about the evolving identity of its participants and publics, the value of public space in the contemporary city, and the relationship between design authority and public participation. It develops the concept of dialogue, from the Bakhtinian theory of dialogism, as a conceptual paradigm for identity, public space and design, recasting the initial investigation into an exploration of alterity (individuals and publics cannot be conceived outside of their situated relations to others), spatial heteroglossia (public space as a production of different discourses) and practical ambivalence (the blurring of boundaries to activate the social and political potential of design). The thesis thus investigates, in Bakhtinian terminology, how different voices inflect the polyphonic landscape of public space, particularly in the context of urban regeneration and the relationship between ideal projections (of publics, of public spaces, of design concepts) and their challenge in the everyday use and management of such places. Furthermore, the inherent ambivalence of dialogue—particularly its openness and the way it allows contradictions to co-exist—is traced throughout as a common thread uniting the questions raised by the Barking Town Square project and those of theory. The methods of investigation emphasise interviews, participant-observation and fieldwork, capturing a project that existed for the duration of my research in a state of becoming.

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ABBREVIATIONS

100PS	100 Public Spaces (GLA programme)
ACD	LBBD Arts and Cultural Development department
AHMM	Alford Hall Monaghan Morris Architects
AUU	Architecture and Urbanism Unit (GLA, former DfL)
BDHS	Barking and District Historical Society
BLC	Barking Learning Centre
BNP	British National Party
CABE	Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment
CCCB	Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona
DfL	Design for London (GLA)
ELT	East London Transit (TfL bus route through Barking)
EPUPS	European Prize for Urban Public Space
GLC	Greater London Council
GLA	Greater London Authority
LBBD	London Borough of Barking and Dagenham
LCC	London City Council
LDA	London Development Agency (GLA)
LTGDC	London Thames Gateway Development Corporation
NLA	New London Architecture
TfL	Transport for London
RCA	Royal College of Arts
REC	Barking and Dagenham Racial Equality Council
UC	Urban Catalyst (developer, see Ken Dytor)
UDC	Urban Development Corporation

FOREWORD

LONDON BOROUGH of BARKING and DAGENHAM

Councillor Charles Fairbrass M.B.E.
Mayor

Mrs Joan Fairbrass
Mayoress

Our ref: CJF/JLA

Date: 1 March 2010

Contact: Mayoral & Civic Support Officer
Tel: 020 8227 2121
Fax: 020 8227 2162
Email: janet.allen@lbbd.gov.uk
Website: barking-dagenham.gov.uk

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I am writing to introduce Thomas-Bernard Kenniff, PhD a candidate in Architectural History and Theory at the Bartlett School of Architecture, University College London. Thomas-Bernard's research focuses on the design of inclusive urban public space and draws on an in-depth study of the new Barking Town Square. He is currently conducting intensive fieldwork in Barking and Dagenham to support his thesis through evidence from local archives, on site observations, and extended interviews with participants in the project which includes Council Officers, Councillors and Local Residents.

I have met with Thomas-Bernard and discussed his research which I am happy to support. He will continue investigations in Barking and Dagenham well into 2011 and I would be pleased if you could give your assistance and thus further his research.

I thank you in anticipation of your support.

With kind regards

[redacted]

Charles Fairbrass
Mayor of Barking and Dagenham
2009-2010

The Mayor's Parlour,
Civic Centre, Dagenham RM10 7BN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have contributed to the making of this thesis, explicitly or implicitly lending their voices to the polyphony of its text. While it would be impossible to acknowledge the contribution of every person met for an interview or those who participated in workshops, every serendipitous encounter with local residents or discussion among colleagues and friends, I would like to briefly express my gratitude to those without whom this research project would not have been possible: to my sponsors, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, UCL, the Canada Council for the Arts and the London Goodenough Association of Canada; to those who, back at the University of Waterloo, supported me in my endeavour to further my interests and to those who, at the Bartlett, extended this support (especially my primary supervisor Jan Birksted, my secondary supervisor Iain Borden, and Barbara Penner); to muf architecture/art and AHMM who generously welcomed my investigation of the Town Square; to the LBBD and the many Council employees who contributed and gave me access to archives and filing cabinets (particularly my acquaintances at the Regeneration and ACD departments); to the librarians and managers of the BLC; and to the Barking archives at Valence House.

I would also like to express my sincere indebtedness to my friends and family who have supported and encouraged me during the last four years, especially in moments of doubt. Thanks in particular to my colleagues Wesley, Patricia, Ben, Léa-Catherine, Orly and Elly for reading, participating and supplying me with constant inspiration, to Bruce for proof-reading, to those at Lac Trois-Saumons and in Pakenham who so generously made space for my writing, and most of all to Emmy for infinite patience and trust.

Working with my primary supervisor, Jan Birksted, has been inspirational. I cannot thank him enough for his support, dedication and astute criticism throughout this research project. Thanks also to my two examiners, Jane Rendell and Doina Petrescu, for their careful and critical reading of the thesis and their generous and encouraging comments. Finally, I would like to recognise the contribution of those who, particularly in Barking, believed in this project enough to go beyond mere interview formalities, those who opened doors, took me in as a local, spoke about their passions, memories or apprehensions, and reminded me of the reasons why I started doing this project in the first place. This thesis is dedicated to them.

MAP 1. GREATER LONDON

London Thames Gateway Development Corporation area

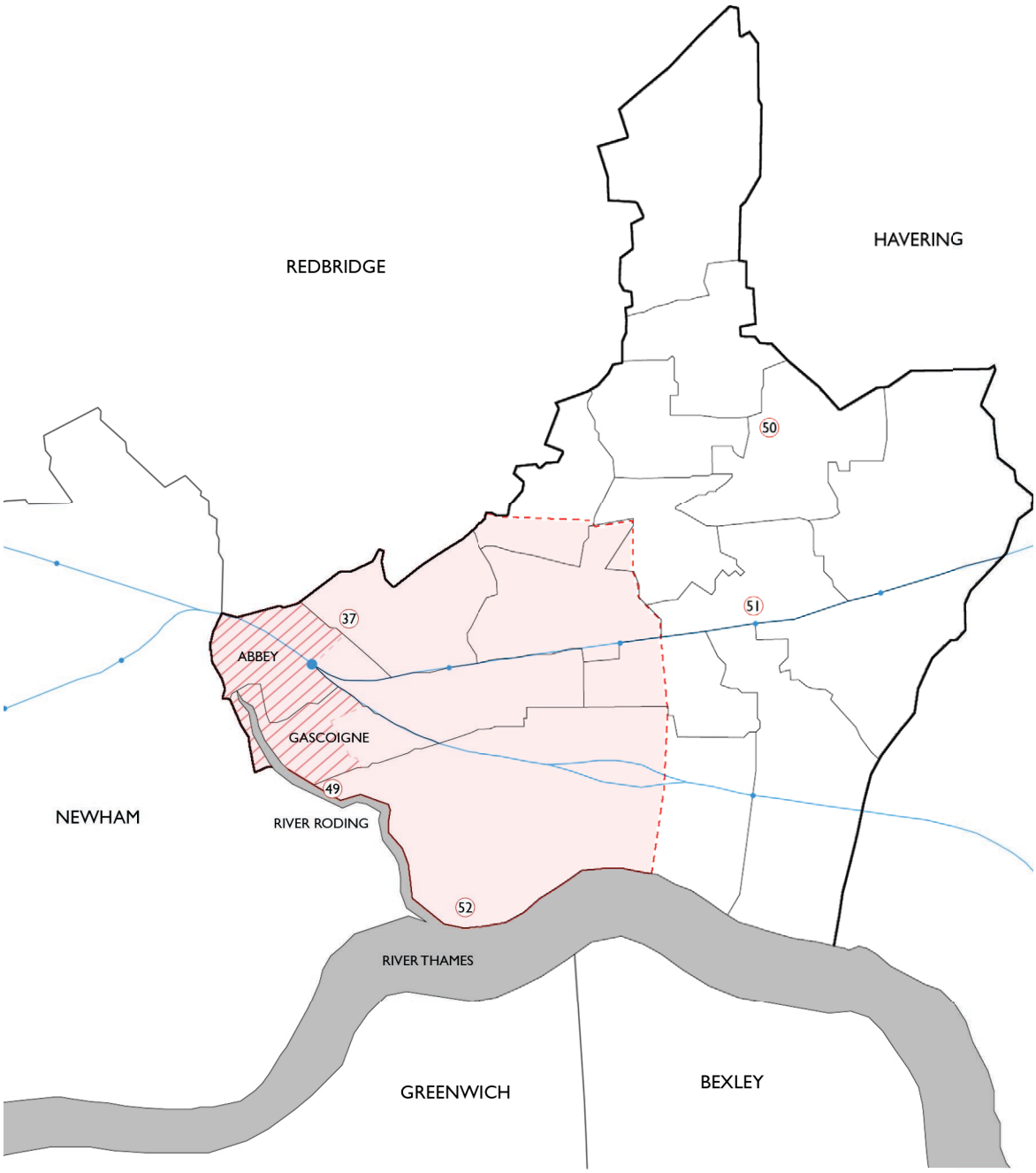
Essex county border (pre-1965)

Inner London border (pre-1965)

Barking Town Square

Plate number

MAP 2. LONDON BOROUGH OF BARKING AND DAGENHAM



Barking Town Centre

Old borders of Municipal Borough of Barking (Essex)

Transit and train lines through Barking Station

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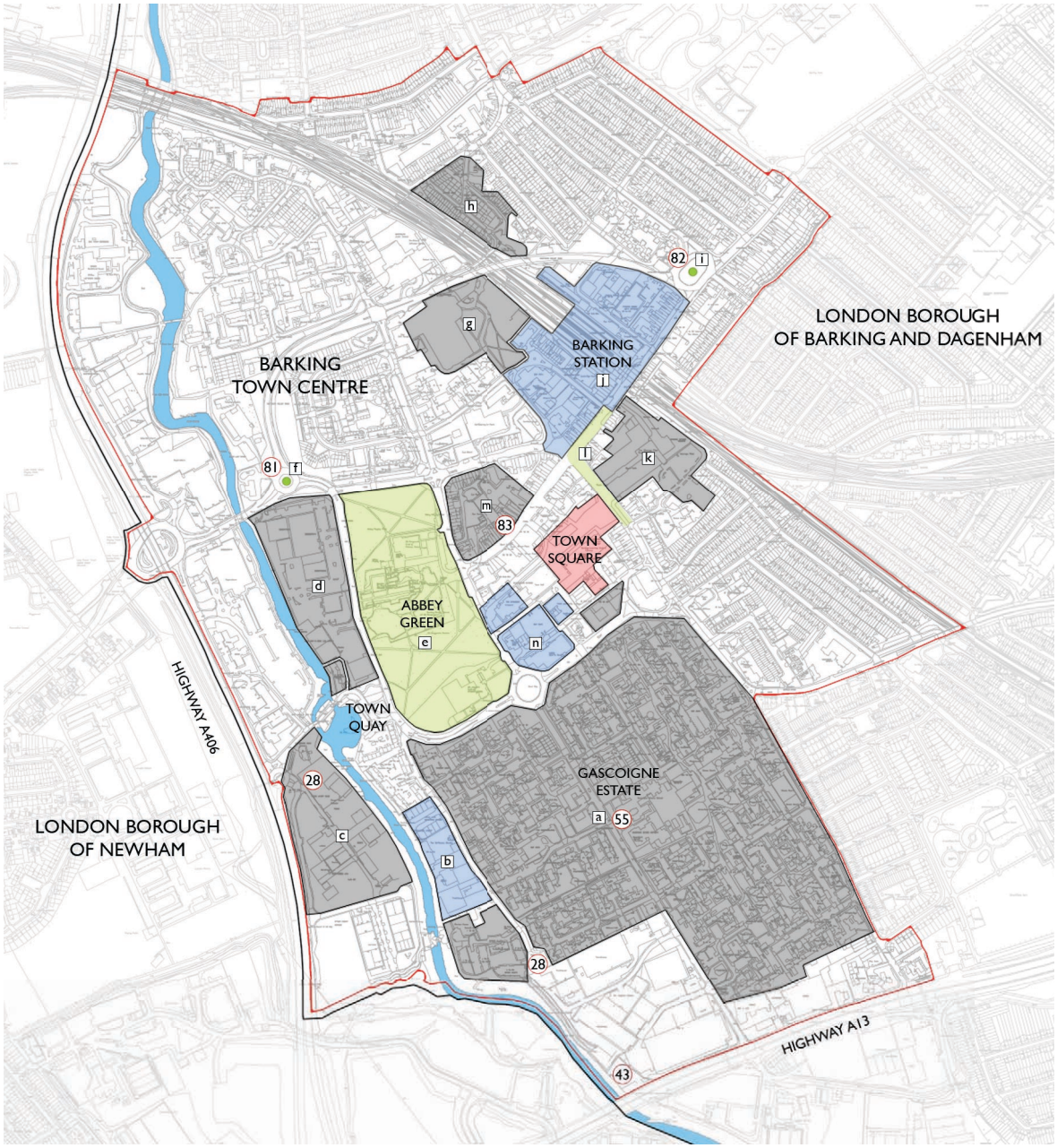
MAP 3. BARKING TOWN CENTRE



Borough limit

Town Centre limit

Recent/future public realm improvements

Recent/future cultural and civic projects

Recent/future residential and mixed-use projects

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d. Abbey Retail Park
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g. King William St Quarter mixed-use
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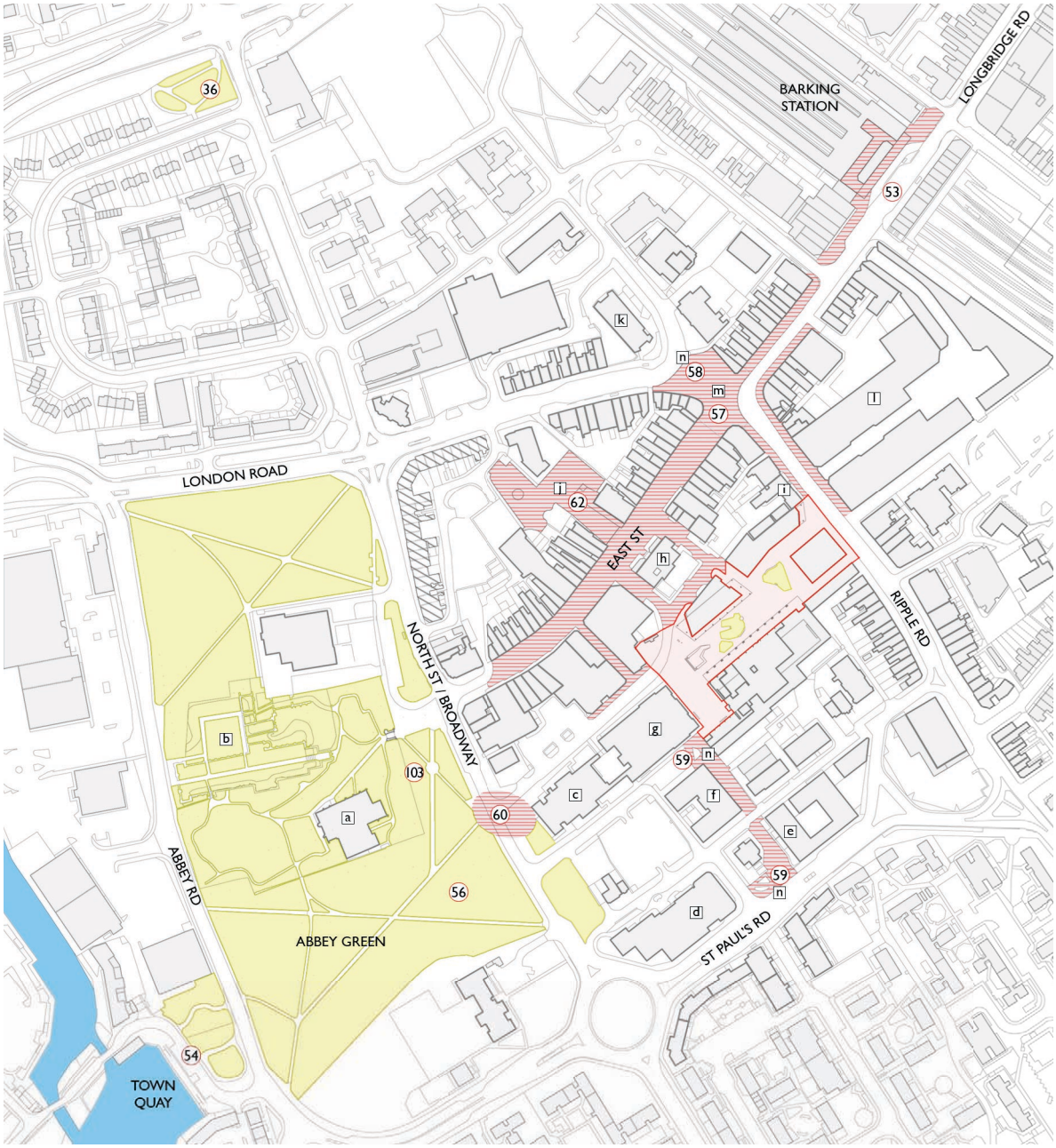
k. Vicarage Field shopping centre
l. East London Transit line (2009)
m. North St/London Rd
n. Axe St/Abbey Sports Centre

MAP 4. BARKING TOWN CENTRE (DETAIL)



Open space and pedestrian connections

Barking Town Square

Buildings slated for demolition

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Town Centre landmarks

a. St Margaret's church
b. Barking Abbey ruins
c. Broadway Theatre
d. Abbey Sports Centre
e. Housing by Jestico and Whiles
f. Primary Care Trust
g. Town Hall
h. Magistrates Court
i. Police Station
j. Market Square/Skills Centre
k. Council offices (Maritime House)
l. Vicarage Field shopping centre
m. Blake's Corner
n. muf Barking Code projects

MAP 5. BARKING TOWN SQUARE

- Barking Central buildings
- Interior space of BLC (ground floor)
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- Arboretum
- Civic square
- Folly Wall and Secret Garden
- Public realm phase 2 border and division between contracts 2a and 2b (dashed)

Barking Central buildings:

a. Ropeworks (above), Barking Learning Centre
b. Bath House
c. Pianoworks (Travelodge, Tesco)
d. Lemonade tower
e. Bike Shed
f. Axe Street Housing

Town Square features:

g. Folly wall and Secret Garden
h. Drinking fountain (asbestos victims memorial)
i. Stage
j. Small chair (designed by RCA students)
k. Fallen trees

A DIALOGICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE ARCHITECTONICS OF DESIGNING PUBLIC SPACE AT BARKING TOWN SQUARE

Figure 1. The three lamps (right, before relocation), Old Barking's traditional 'Speakers' Corner', with Barking Town Hall in the background, c1970. Source: Valence House

INTRODUCTION

CHORUS

'…I hear *voices* in everything and dialogic relations among them.'

Mikhail Bakhtin[1]

In Barking, where a new Town Square was planned and built between 1999 and the end of 2010, voices entered into a complex dialogue that has transformed, and is still transforming, this area of London whose primary identifier is ambivalence: a place both distant and near; a place both large and small; a place both old and new; a place caught in the centripetal pull of giant London but still feeling the faint tug of Essex; a place of industrial transition; a place of many religions; a place of migration: from the slum clearances of the early twentieth-century to recent economic and cultural displacement; a place whose identity is both locally grounded and externally produced.

This thesis focuses on how the multiple and often conflicting voices of urban development and regeneration come together for a major public realm project, the Barking Town Square. How are social and spatial relationships defined and negotiated in the design process in such a situation? Looking at one particular case of public space, the thesis aims to develop a general framework to explore and understand the relationships, the values and the methods that structure and make up the transformational processes of our public realm and intervene significantly into our lives and our environments. In this first chapter, the background for the rest of the investigation is developed by introducing my theoretical framework based on Bakhtinian dialogism, my case study and some considerations of methodology. The reason for this is that all of these—case study, theory and research methods—are interconnected, and, indeed, the theory preceded the choice of case study, as will be seen below.

DIALOGUE

My initial research questions had arisen from issues that concerned me, issues of responsibility and politics in the design process, grounded in a firm belief in the social and cultural vocation of design and architecture. How should the relation between architect and others in the design process be negotiated? How is social responsibility articulated by design work in the service of others? These initial intentions were carried over from my

[1] 'Toward a Methodology for the Human Sciences', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1986), pp. 159–172 (p. 169).

previous research on public space, during which I had made use of the concept of assemblage.[2] The encompassing nature of the concept of assemblage had had the benefit of including both social and physical aspects of the public realm: local residents, private developers, designers, landmarks and the various physical elements of a project could, in my initial conceptualisation, all make sense as a complex whole when treated as distinct but related elements held in dialectical juxtaposition. However, if there were to be a unification of complexity and heterogeneity at the intersection of design and public space, then it was along lines described by Walter Benjamin in his aesthetics and politics of montage.[3] In other words, my initial solution to dealing with complexity and heterogeneity was to switch back and forth between the concepts of assemblage, montage and even collage. [4]

But then, as research progressed, Mikhail Bakhtin's work, introduced first as the source for a possible theory of social and spatial heterogeneity, gradually emerged as a framework for the entire thesis, displacing and replacing the notions of assemblage, collage and montage. Though Bakhtin is primarily known for his work on the nature of discourse and as one of the key dialogical thinkers alongside Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas,[5] his work began to appear to me far more capacious and soon turned out to be applicable to the three main topics of the research project: inter-subjective relationships, public space and design. It emphasised dialogical processes in which neither actors nor their production are finalised (or finite). It resonated with current trends in which the ethical and the aesthetic are reciprocal.[6] And it exposed the relationship between ideal constructs and

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[2] Thomas-Bernard Kenniff, 'Assembly : a Revaluation of Public Space in Toronto' (unpublished Master of Architecture, Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo, 2005). At this point my understanding of assemblage was unrelated to Manuel DeLanda's assemblage theory or Gilles Deleuze's notion of *agencement*. In assemblage theory, wholes are characterised by relations of exteriority and affected by territorialising and de-territorialising forces, similar to what is discussed in Chapter 2.2. See Manuel DeLanda, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity* (London: Continuum, 2006).

[3] My position owed much to Susan Buck-Morss' astute reading of Benjamin's own work. See Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing : Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989).

[4] This included a wide variety of theoretical examples including work by the Internationale Situationiste on space and the city (1957-1972), *Complexity and Contradiction* by Robert Venturi (New York: MOMA, 1966), *Collage City* by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (MIT Press, 1984), *Architecture and Disjunction* by Bernard Tschumi (MIT Press, 1994), and the work of Jonathan Hill between 1998 and 2003 as well as practical examples including, in a broad sweep, the radical paper architecture of Archigram, Superstudio or Daniel Libeskind, the semantic pastiches of James Stirling, Michael Graves or Robert Venturi, the deconstructions of Bernard Tschumi, Peter Eisenman or the early Frank Gehry, the early projects of Rem Koolhaas, the critical interventions of Lacaton-Vassal, and even including the radically different work of those supporting various types of participatory methods from Lucien Kroll to Alejandro Aravena (Elemental). At this stage in the project, my references included Hannah Arendt, Richard Sennett and Jean Baudrillard who, although differing considerably, were all addressing the particular phenomenon of blurred boundaries between public and private realms in modern society.

[5] For a discussion of the three thinkers see Michael Gardiner, 'Alterity and Ethics: A Dialogical Perspective', *Theory Culture Society*, 1996 <doi:10.1177/026327696013002009>.

[6] Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (Routledge, 2011); Jeremy Till, *Architecture Depends* (MIT Press, 2009); Jane Collier, 'The Art of Moral Imagination: Ethics in the Practice of Architecture', *Journal of Business Ethics*, 66 (2006), 307–317; Alain Findeli, 'Ethics, Aesthetics, and Design', *Design Issues*, 10 (1994), 49–68.

everyday practices. Furthermore, Bakhtinian concepts are underdeveloped in architectural history and theory and so offered an exciting and alternative approach to the obviously relevant and better-trodden path of Lefebvrian concepts.[7] On the relationship between Bakhtin and architecture, there is a small studio exercise published by Jean La Marche[8], a couple of texts by Josep Muntañola Thornberg on the dialogism of the architectural project[9], and an article by William Whyte that suggests that the work of architecture is a series of transpositions between genres[10], but no serious academic texts that develop Bakhtinian concepts extensively within architecture. Only in related fields (with spatial or creative orientations) do we find more developed material: in cultural geography with the work of Mireya Folch-Serra, Rob Shields, and Julian Holloway and James Kneale[11]; and in the arts with the work of Deborah Haynes and Grant Kester.[12] Of course, this is not counting the numerous texts in social studies, political science, literature and ethics that make use of Bakhtin and that are used throughout this thesis. In the field of architecture, this thesis thus explores new ground between the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism, public space and design.

The initial starting point of the thesis raised additional and, at that point, somewhat insurmountable issues of aesthetics, ethics, urban studies, and social, political and cultural theory. Because of its wide breadth and range of related concepts, I discovered that Bakhtin's dialogical model was able to connect and relate disparate aspects of my research, from the ethical relationship between one person and another to the expression of spatial and temporal variables in the built environment. This breadth seemed particularly relevant when considering the dynamics of designing for others, design as a social act, the revaluation of dichotomies such as social/physical or architect/user, and finally the

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[7] Michael Gardiner writes that dialogism is very close to the open material dialectics of thinkers like Maurice Merleau-Ponty or Henri Lefebvre. Michael Gardiner, '"A Very Understandable Horror of Dialectics": Bakhtin and Marxist Phenomenology', in *Materializing Bakhtin : the Bakhtin Circle and Social Theory*, ed. by Craig Brandist and Galin Tikhanov (Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, Oxford, 2000), pp. 119–141 (p. 139); also Michael Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life* (Routledge, 2000).

[8] Jean La Marche, 'Surrealism's Unexplored Possibilities in Architecture', in *Surrealism and architecture*, ed. by Thomas Mical (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 273–289.

[9] Josep Muntañola Thornberg, *Arquitectura y Dialogia* (Barcelona: UPC, 2006); Josep Muntañola Thornberg, 'Le projet architectural comme rencontre chronotopique', *Nouveaux Actes Sémiotiques*, 2008 <http://revues.unilim.fr/nas/document.php?id=2123> [accessed 12 October 2012].

[10] William Whyte, 'How Do Buildings Mean? Some Issues of Interpretation in the History of Architecture', *History and Theory*, 45 (2006), 153–177.

[11] Mireya Folch-Serra, 'Place, Voice, Space: Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogical Landscape', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 8 (1990), 255–274; Rob Shields, 'The "System of Pleasure": Liminality and the Carnivalesque at Brighton', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7 (1990), 39 –72 <doi:10.1177/026327690007001002>; R. Shields, 'Meeting or Mis-meeting? The Dialogical Challenge to Verstehen', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 47 (1996), 275; Julian Holloway and James Kneale, 'Mikhail Bakhtin: Dialogics of Space', in *Thinking Space*, ed. by N. J. Thrift and Mike Crang, Critical Geographies (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 71–88.

[12] Deborah J. Haynes, *Bakhtin and the Visual Arts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004).

conception of architecture as a process made up of multiple voices and contradictory forces. In addition, I discovered that the early Bakhtin essays explored the structure of creative activity and processes, and this gave an inflection to his dialogical model that was highly appropriate for architectural studies.

Pam Morris writes that the common ground to all of Bakhtin's writing is

> a recurrent concern with an inter-related cluster of key concepts: self and other, event and open-ended continuity, borderzone and outsideness, interactive creative process and social evaluation, dialogic and monologic.[13]

If we were to uncover some basic principles from all these concepts we could follow Bakhtin scholar Tzvetan Todorov's lead and highlight two major positions of Bakhtin's thinking. The first, and perhaps most important, is 'considering intersubjectivity as logically preceding subjectivity.'[14] It is perhaps not, as Todorov notes, that Bakhtin valorises the social above the individual, but that the individual cannot be conceived of or given significance in isolation from the social. As critics Katarina Clark and Michael Holquist state, all meaning, for Bakhtin, is located in the social.[15] Todorov further writes, and we will come back to this throughout the thesis, that the resulting dialogical principle is that

> it is impossible to conceive of any being outside of the relations that link it to the other.[16]

The second major position highlighted by Todorov is to answer the early twentieth-century debate on form and content by not valorising one over the other:

> [Bakhtin] asserts the necessity of finding a link between the two, of taking both into account simultaneously, and of maintaining a perfect balance between them.[17]

While this refers to an early debate, the mode of thinking that leads to this position is crucial and resonates throughout Bakhtin's work when revaluating the dichotomies that are usually found at the heart of Western thinking. It is the aim of dialogism, then, to render the borders and boundaries inherent to these dichotomies fluid and contested, but without

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[13] M. M. Bakhtin, V. N. Voloshinov and P. N. Medvedev, *The Bakhtin Reader : Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, and Voloshinov*, ed. by Pam Morris (London: E. Arnold, 1994), p. 5.
[14] Tzvetan Todorov, *Mikhail Bakhtin : the Dialogical Principle*, Theory and History of Literature (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 30.
[15] Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 12.
[16] Todorov, p. 94.
[17] Todorov, p. 34.

superseding them or giving precedence to one value over the other.[18] Writing of the principles that underpin all of Bakhtin's work, Holquist writes:

> Bakhtin emphasizes performance, history, actuality, and the openness of dialogue, as opposed to the closed dialectic of Structuralism's binary oppositions. Bakhtin makes the enormous leap from dialectical, or partitive, thinking, which is still presumed to be the universal norm, to dialogic or relational thinking.[19]

A third principle that may be added to those highlighted by Todorov is the acknowledgement of centripetal and centrifugal forces that simultaneously act on things to make them either cohere or pull apart. This phenomenon is perhaps most apparent in Bakhtin's work on language. He describes *heteroglossia* (other-speech-ness) as the condition that is manifest in any language where, on the one hand, there needs to be a common system more or less fixed (independent of context), but where, on the other hand, the common system is used in situations where context diverts, affects and subverts the particular meanings standardised by the system.[20] In other words, the dichotomy re-evaluated here is between system and contextual use. What heteroglossia suggests is that at the heart of every utterance (in the case of language), or more generally at the heart of every action, lies a profound ambivalence marked by the co-existence of both abstract system and the reality of everyday life.[21]

Over and above all else, Bakhtin's conception of dialogue unites the concepts described above as well as those developed in his work on ethics, linguistics and literary criticism. Understood as such, Bakhtinian dialogue is far more capacious than speech-based or text-based communication, and points to the inherent multiplicity, relationality and unfinalisability of anything (what Todorov captures with his 'dialogic principle' explained above).

Taken together, the principles and concepts that make up Bakhtin's body of work, being dialogue, inter-subjectivity (or the principle of alterity), the critique and revaluation of dichotomies through a dialogic model, and the acknowledgement of ambivalence and conflicting forces at the heart of every action and meaning, appeared as a promising framework to address and evaluate my research topics. Indeed, as I worked through my

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[18] For examples of this, see Michael Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. by Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 28–48; and Graham Pechey, 'Boundaries Versus Binaries: Bakhtin In/Against the History of Ideas', *Radical Philosophy*, 54 (1990), 23–31.

[19] Clark and Holquist, p. 7.

[20] See Michael Holquist's introduction in M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination : Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press Slavic Series No. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. ix–xx.

[21] Contrary to the Saussurian structuralist approach to language, Bakhtin argues that the utterance (*la parole*) must be the object of linguistic studies. The crucial difference is that the utterance, for Bakhtin, is expressive of both individual and social patterns and never independent of language (*la langue*). See Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev, pp. 29–31.

analysis of empirical material and theory, my three research categories (identity, public space and design) transformed and were recast according to my dialogical investigation as explorations of alterity (individuals and publics cannot be conceived outside of their situated relations to others), spatial heteroglossia (public space as a production of different discourses situated in time and space) and practical ambivalence (the implications of practicing dialogue as understood above, working with unfinalisability, collaboration and blurred boundaries to activate the social and political potential of design).

MUF AND BARKING

The same dialogical framework just described, as it turned out and as was previously mentioned, ended up playing a decisive role in the choice of case study and in the development of my research methods. The reasons for choosing the Barking Town Square as the only case study for this research project were not precise from the start, but, like my theoretical framework and methodology, emerged and were consolidated during the research.[22] My interest in the concept of dialogue raised particular issues with respect to methodology, which, as will be seen below, in turn informed the choice of case study. The emphasis on 'voice' and the immediacy of experience in Bakhtin's theory demanded that I find a case study and an approach that would bring out these aspects in order to test them against Bakhtin's theories, and, thus, to cross-examine the case study and the theory against each other. Early on, then, interviews and participant-observation were chosen as principal methods. One of the initial challenges, then, was to find a relevant case study that would raise questions of its own while simultaneously responding to these methodological constraints.

First chosen as one of a series of possible case studies, the Town Square slowly emerged as the single case study of this thesis. The project stood out for several reasons: its inclusion in Mayor Ken Livingstone's 100 Public Spaces programme (100PS, the Square was included in phase two in 2003); it had just won the 2008 European Prize for Urban Public Space (EPUPS); and its designers, muf architecture/art, had built a reputation for critical public realm projects that challenged boundaries, relied on public engagement and conversation, and emphasised processes and collaboration. Also, like architecture in Bakhtin, there was very little about Barking in architecture. Little had been written on the project, with only a few scattered reviews or mentions here and there, but no serious

[22] The single most recurrent question I have been asked when describing my research project has been 'why Barking?' The question was common to academics, non-academics, Londoners and even local residents and would usually be asked in a tone of mesmerised incredulity (I am not counting those with no previous knowledge of the place): incredulity why Barking would have any interest for academic purposes, or why a French-Canadian PhD student would come to London and 'end up in a place like Barking.'

academic study. The Town Square thus offered the opportunity for this research to explore new territory laid out by a recognised and celebrated practice.

The Barking Town Square is the public realm part of Barking Central, a large mixed-use project, itself part of intensive regeneration efforts in the whole of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (LBBD). The overall project, by developers Redrow with building architects Alford Hall Monaghan Morris (AHMM) and public realm consultants muf, includes 518 new flats in four different buildings, a new Learning Centre (library, Council services and cultural and education facilities), a hotel, 1,340 square meters of retail space at ground level, and, of course, a major new public space at its heart (see Map 5).[23] The development stands next to Barking's 1958 Town Hall, which closes the end of the public space to the south west. The immediate vicinity of the Town Square has a mix of programmes and functions including civic amenities, health services, sports facilities, residential accommodation, commercial outlets (retail, street market, restaurants, hotel), and cultural amenities (library, gallery and theatre). The project is highly visible throughout the Town Centre, being partly clad in vivid colours and controversially rising much higher than the adjacent Town Hall clock tower.

During the development of the project, all three levels of government were involved in decision making: the LBBD as land owners and project managers; the Greater London Authority (GLA) through Design for London (DfL) and the London Development Agency (LDA); and the UK central government through the London Thames Gateway Development Corporation (LTGDC) who, after 2005, actually took over planning authority for the project from the LBBD. The project was developed as a public-private partnership with the bulk of the money coming from the developers and targeted funding from public bodies.[24] Given the range of actors, the system of funding, and the rhetoric supporting the project, the Barking Town Square has been presented as a typical example of New Labour regeneration policies of the same period.[25] It expresses the rhetoric of regeneration, 'urban renaissance', 'sustainable communities', community

[23] Figures taken from AHMM, 'Barking Central Information Pack', 2010.
[24] The Council has the freehold to the land and leased it to the developer (for 125 years) who then worked with their own consultants, keeping the Council as a partner in the project. The open space of the Town Square, whose lease the Council retains, was funded primarily through a Section 106 agreement between the LBBD and the developer which demanded that a fraction of the money invested for Barking Central went to public realm improvements, including public space and affordable housing (some public funds were provided by the LTGDC).
[25] See Tim Abrahams, 'Barking Central', *Blueprint*, June 2010, pp. 36–42; Owen Hatherley, 'Genius Loci', *Sit down man, you're a bloody tragedy*, 2010 <http://nastybrutalistandshort.blogspot.com> [accessed 3 March 2011]; and Ellis Woodman, 'Square Dancing', *Building Design*, 2009, pp. 12–15.

cohesion, public and private partnership, economic growth and, of course, the importance of design excellence for architecture and urban design.[26]

In spite of the regeneration efforts taking place in Barking, regardless of whether these were positive or negative, other factors attracted public attention on Barking. During my years of research, Barking was mostly known as a remote part of London or Essex, post-industrial, depressed, mostly white working class, with high unemployment, one of the country's most deprived local authorities, and a household name when, in 2006, the British National Party (BNP) managed to exploit high immigration levels and the housing crisis to win nearly a quarter of the local assembly.[27] In 2010, it was in Barking that BNP leader Nick Griffin chose to run for UK parliament—the election routinely expressed as 'the battle for Barking'.[28] It was not surprising, then, that prejudices tended to paint a sombre portrait of the place. Even after years of working on the project, muf project architect Alison Crawshaw could not help inadvertently reducing the area to this point of view: when I first met her in June 2009 and asked her to describe the area, one of the first things she told me was 'Barking is BNP.' [29]

My first official interview with Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw of muf was a few months later, in October 2009. The remarkable thing about our conversation, even then, was its unexpected dialogism, not only in the dynamics of the conversation but in the way the designers framed their work for the Town Square in terms of inter-personal relationships, opposition and ambiguity. Perhaps one of the clearest methodological aspects to come out of my first encounters with the designers (I had briefly met Alison and Liza separately before to set up the possibility for my research project) was that these interviews would only be marginally about fact finding, and that their biggest contribution would be as conversations about the project, relationships, public space, and design. Much like the design of the Town Square itself, what started out as a relevant case study developed into an evolving field of research relationships, questions and methods. Without ever mentioning dialogism, the office's work and rhetoric, as well as my relationship with them, resonated strongly with, but also challenged, the theoretical model.[30]

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[26] Here I am thinking specifically of policies coming out of government-backed studies like Urban Task Force, 'Toward an Urban Renaissance' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2002); Urban Task Force and Richard Rogers, 'Toward a Strong Urban Renaissance' (Urban Task Force, 2005); Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future' (ODPM, 2003).

[27] For further notes on the politics in the Borough, see Appendix T.

[28] See Laura Fairrie, *The Battle for Barking* (Dartmouth Films, 2010); John Harris, 'Griffin Vs Hodge: The Battle for Barking', *Guardian*, 13 March 2010, section Politics; Cahal Milmo, 'The Battle for Barking', *The Independent*, 10 April 2010; and Daniel Trilling, 'The Battle for Barking: Won or Lost?', *Cultural Capital*, 2010 <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/cultural-capital/2010/10/bnp-battle-for-barking> [accessed 29 November 2010].

[29] Refer to Appendix A for a short introduction to those people who have played a major role in my research.

[30] The relationship between muf's practice and dialogism is explored in Chapter 3.2.

Muf architecture/art was founded in 1994 by architects Liza Fior and Juliet Bidgood (who left the office in 2002), and artist Katherine Clarke with architectural critic Katherine Shonfield (who passed away in 2003) acting as a sort of external reviewer to the practice.[31] In addition to mostly working on projects in the urban public realm, the main traits of the office have been a sustained collaboration between artists and architects, a commitment to social investment, a critique of participation through conversation and occupation, and emphasising processes and guidelines over finished products. The first slide of muf's presentation for their interview for the Town Square project reads 'from detail to strategy and back again'.[32] The motto, a variation on what Katherine Shonfield described as muf's approach to design, the movement from the particular to the general and back to the particular[33], can be interpreted, through a Bakhtinian framework, as the dialogical exchanges that still play out in muf's projects. This movement between detail and strategy simplifies, as Jay Merrick writes, an attempt to resolve the tension between local potential and the complexity and scale of urban phenomena that make up the background of every urban public realm project.[34] Over the years this tension has been partially resolved (or at least negotiated) in urban public realm projects brought to completion including Shared Ground for Southwark Street (London, 1996-2001), Pleasure Garden of the Utilities (Stoke City, 1998), Tilbury Estate (2003-2005), Barking Town Square (2004-2010), and Hackney Wick and Fish Island (2010). While the details of the negotiation change, the general approach of the office has more or less remained constant. With characteristic humour, Liza Fior tells me:

> You know we just do the same thing over and over again, Thomas. That's the joke. We've been making the same work, over and over again. There is a beautiful drawing in the book for Southwark Street where you have the names of the people we spoke to on a map and where they were located spatially. And then there was the proposition which was about expanding the territory of the street. That's fifteen years ago and in a way we're still doing it now. But you just have to keep banging on because it's still not how masterplanning works.[35]

In Southwark, and for all the projects listed above, the proposition is that the tension between detail and strategy is resolved in conversations, expanded territories, and art and

[31] Katherine Shonfield changed her name to Katherine Vaughn Williams in 2001. In this thesis I use the name under which she signed the article cited.
[32] From digital slide presentations found on the muf server. I will refer to these throughout as DSP, year and month. This one DSP200411.
[33] Katherine Shonfield, 'Premature Gratification and Other Pleasures', in *This Is What We Do : a muf Manual*, by Muf (London: Ellipsis, 2001), pp. 14–22 (p. 14).
[34] Jay Merrick, 'Muf Is Enough', *The Independent*, 2 August 2010, pp. 14–15. Merrick describes muf as 'pathologists of the genius loci'.
[35] Interviews throughout this thesis will be referred to by INT, year, month and day. Here for example, Liza Fior, INT20100219. Please refer to Appendix B for a full list of interviews.

architecture practiced together in the public realm. In all of muf's work the significance of conversation between various actors is emphasised: between architect, artist, client, fabricator and potential user. Jane Rendell writes that 'in conversations between these people, active listening plays a critical role, for it allows one set of processes to be informed, and in some cases transformed, by others.'[36] The provocation, she continues, might reside in conceiving conversation and architecture as possible stand-ins for each other. So the critical significance of conversation in their work is to make space for dialogical exchanges by expanding and overlapping boundaries (whether disciplinary, contractual or social). One of the effects of a practice critical of boundaries is the exposure of the power relations that are necessary for boundary-maintenance, which may have led Alicia Pivaro to give muf credit for the 'way it exposes politics through architecture.'[37] Finally, the blurring of art and architecture is the boundary-treading that is perhaps most characteristic of the practice as well as the one that allows for both critical conversations and expanded territories. One of the advantages of collaborating with artists, writes muf collaborator Katherine Vaughn Williams, is the reversal of the architect's requirement to find predefined solutions: an increased 'freedom from having to come up with solutions to problems.'[38] This obviously fits well with the practice's interest in conceiving the design proposal as a process rather than a finished product and also dovetails with their view of collaboration as a 'relationship between differences' that acknowledges limitations and the risk of failure.[39] Collaboration, for muf, is in fact intimately tied to the idea of public space as the 'place of lived experience and democracy'[40], of relationships, difference and uncertainty.

This brief introduction of some major themes in the firm's work shows how, as my research developed, my theoretical framework felt increasingly relevant in evaluating my case study. When the editors of *Spatial Agency* write that muf are 'all about the voices of others'[41] they succinctly sum up the potential of joining dialogism with the firm. Yet, as was explained in the previous section, dialogism reaches far beyond the spoken voices of others, and a dialogical analysis of muf's work could potentially show how this reach is also achieved in their work (this is developed in Chapter 3.2). The list of Bakhtinian concepts listed by Pam Morris earlier could well describe the range of concepts that also make up

[36] Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture : a Place Between* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), p. 161.
[37] Alicia Pivaro, introducing muf for their 1999 RIBA lecture (part of the institute's Free Radicals programme), quoted in Pamela Buxton, 'A Talent to Bemuse', *Building Design*, 11 June 1999, p. 32.
[38] Katherine Vaughn Williams, 'We Need Artists' Ways of Doing Things: a Critical Analysis of the Role of the Artist in Regeneration Practice', in *Architecture an Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till (London: Spon Press, 2005), pp. 217–226 (p. 221).
[39] Muf, *This Is What We Do : a Muf Manual* (London: Ellipsis, 2001), pp. 29–30.
[40] Katherine Shonfield quoted in Muf, p. 28.
[41] Awan, Schneider and Till, p. 175.

the concerns of muf: inter-subjective relationships, open-endedness, boundaries, collaboration, creative activity, social commentary and dialogue.

A further resonance between muf and dialogism emerged quite early on, and that is the one that eventually links ethical action with ambivalence (developed in Chapter 11). In that first interview of October 2009, Liza Fior mentioned how the firm was conscious of occupying a double-edged position between developers and local residents. This reiterated something that comes up in the *muf Manual,* lectures and interviews and how the office seems to happily occupy double-edged positions, for example between representatives of local residents and agents of authority, between being unconcerned by critics and playfully accepting how they are portrayed by the media, or between formulating critiques of private development and gladly accepting private funding.[42] The office is therefore vulnerable to criticism because of inherent contradictions between its intentions and its actions, between the theory it elaborates and its practice. While muf admit to these tensions, the architectural press wrestles with their meaning.[43] Part of the unexpected dialogism of our encounters was the way muf acknowledged the contradictions that are wilfully brought to co-exist in their practice. In addition to establishing connections between the considerations of socially-oriented design in the public realm and dialogical theory, the candour of the office proved invaluable in terms of research methods for this thesis because it allowed our encounters to be conversations rather than recordings of monological statements. Acknowledging contradictions may sound duplicitous or hypocritical, but it also points to a readiness to assert the ambivalence and ambiguity characterised by the uncertainty of conversation and dialogue, the expansion of territories and their access, and the risk of collaboration.[44] Overall, what might succeed best in showing ambivalence is the ability to laugh at themselves, of not covering contradictions at all cost, and understanding that good jokes might be those that tread the boundary between serious and light, or between the exceptional and the everyday.

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[42] In her 2007 Bartlett lecture, Liza Fior spoke of the compromised position of every socially oriented architectural practice by explicitly referring to Margaret Crawford, 'Can Architects Be Socially Responsible?', in *Out of Site : a Social Criticism of Architecture*, ed. by Diane Ghirardo (Seattle: Bay Press, 1991). For a similar reflection on the relationship between the intentions of theory and the realities of practice, see Liza Fior and others, 'Rights of Common: Ownership, Participation, Risk', in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (London: Spon Press, 2005), pp. 211-216.

[43] A good example of this are two *AD* issues featuring the practice. *The 1970s Is Here and Now*, published in 2005, obviously establishes links between the practice and theoretical ideals of the 1970s. *Theoretical Meltdown*, published only four years later, showcases the Barking Town Square as one of eleven examples of most relevant current work chosen by eleven international critics, in the midst of articles proclaiming the death of theory.

[44] Something that was expressed, quite tellingly, in an interview with the firm as a sort of 'flexible idealism'. Muf, 'An Invisible Privilege', in *Altering Practices*, ed. by Doina Petrescu (Routledge, 2007), pp. 57-68 (p. 65)

METHODOLOGY

As previously mentioned, the chosen theoretical framework influenced the choice of research methods which in turn influenced the choice of the case study. But rather than a linear relation between the three, I quickly discovered how the three actually fed back on each other. As we will now see, early findings in the case study had a direct influence on the development of research methods and the theoretical framework.[45] When I started research in late summer 2009, phase two of the Town Square was still under construction (see Map 5). This meant that most documents had not yet been archived with some still sitting on desks or lost in the back of filling cabinets.[46] Very little had been written on the project in the architectural press and no serious academic study existed. I was dealing with a project, to paraphrase Bakhtin, in a state of becoming. While this posed certain methodological problems, it also revealed the potential of a dialogical approach to research itself based primarily on interviews and participant-observation. Because the project was still developing, I found it was more accessible than others I had earlier considered for research.[47] Both designers (more so muf than AHMM) and the LBBD were willing to disclose information and discuss the project before its reproduction in official archives or marketing brochures. That is, while the project still brought out a certain rhetoric characteristic of people and organisations in authority, its boundaries were fairly porous, meaning that one was able to go beyond official rhetoric. The project has also been accommodating with respect to engaging with local residents primarily because of its integration in the Town Centre and its everyday life, and its position between a large civic project and a small neighbourhood project. Speaking with local residents, I felt that, even

[45] As my research developed, the close relationship between case study and theory, especially in terms of muf's practice, became quite clear. This does not seem to raise many questions when discussing a particular framework for understanding (most of Part I and Part II) but can do so whenever action or practice is brought up. Bakhtin's work, which on the surface does not address architectural design, has to be adapted. This would not have been possible without the evaluation of the Barking Town Square or without a dialogue between theory and case study. In other words, design theory in Bakhtin had to be sometimes discovered as a transposition of his work (and his critics' work) using the lens of my case study. Not surprisingly, what was most telling for a dialogical investigation with an emphasis on ambivalence were not the many overlaps, but the emerging discrepancies say in muf's own practice, between the reality of the Barking Town Square and the ideal notions presented by heteroglossia (Chapters 1.4 and 2.4), or the prescriptive aspects of Bakhtin's model for creative activity (Chapter 3.4).

[46] A typical example of this was a document mentioned by a former Council employee during an interview. She suggested I ask people at the Arts and Cultural Development department for it. When I did, they could not locate it. I later showed up at their offices and went through their filing cabinets and found nothing. During a second visit, now feeling as though the document was indeed lost, I sat with one employee at her computer and we did a search through the department's server. Nothing came up. I was about to get up and leave when I noticed a folder, at the bottom of a pile of miscellaneous papers, its partially visible tag showing the first three letters of the project in question. We pulled the folder from the pile and within it found the document we had been looking for. The whole process took well over four months.

[47] For example, my attempt at the very beginning of the project to include the GLA City Hall by Foster and Partners soon hit a wall. Reaching beyond the official representation of the project by its authorities proved much too difficult. In contrast, the authorities involved in the Barking Town Square project were usually very happy to meet (often more than once).

though the project still remained partly inaccessible due to its scale and its status as an icon of regeneration, the project was still manageable and they could speak about it from direct experience.[48] What has also been fascinating with the Town Square is how it has been possible to observe the production of the project on site simultaneously with its reproduction in interviews, lectures and articles and gauge how these changed over time. Time came to play a major role in articulating some of the arguments in this thesis, particularly in relation to the dialogical concept of unfinalisability. What surfaced was that both the identity of participants and the meaning attributed to objects and processes were also in a constant state of becoming and developed dialogically. Furthermore, and this was one of the original principles of pursuing this type of fieldwork methodology, my position as a researcher in the production of knowledge about the project could not be ignored, especially since most of the original material and discovered material yet to be archived were direct results of my own activities. It was telling, for example, how my presence in an interview could be understood to transform the conversation. Sometimes speaking on a subject that they would never have discussed otherwise, local residents would ask questions or answer questions a certain way which could not be dissociated from my own identity. Another telling point has been how bits of conversation with Liza Fior resurfaced in later interviews, or how some of my own photographs would appear in muf's representation of project.

These challenges, as was noted above, are also what brought out the potential of a dialogical approach to research. At this point, some notes on the relationship between Bakhtin's theory and social anthropological research methods, as well as how this relationship can inform architectural research, are in order. When Bakhtin writes, in the epigraph to this chapter, that he hears voices in everything, he is summarising the reach of dialogical thinking. He is not referring to the novel or any particular text, but to the cognition and understanding of social phenomena in general. In his notes on methodology in the social sciences (from where the quote is taken), Bakhtin offers three significant ideas. First, no objectification of living subjects should take place. 'Precision, he writes, is surmounting the otherness of the other without transforming him into purely one's own.'[49] The subject of study, in other words, must retain its voice. Second, the environment of the subject of study also has to be given voice(s). The things surrounding a person, for example, only make sense if they are understood to have meaning for that person, i.e. that there is a dialogue between them. Finally, over (what Bakhtin calls) 'great time', the

[48] The temporal and spatial conception of public space according to dialogical or relational principles is developed in Part II.
[49] Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology', p. 169.

meaning attributed to anything is never final but always open-ended.[50] One of the consequences of these ideas suggests that research does not close off anything or anybody. Even in the final text we find other voices and dialogic relations among them.

As methodological principles, these ideas resonated strongly with social anthropology and ethnography, especially in the movement, started in the late 1970s, criticising the authority of ethnographers in describing their subjects. Bakhtin's ideas were used to describe the multi-vocal construction of texts and their resulting polyphony or hybridity.[51] The intention was to allow or to find out the presence of others in texts that had traditionally denied their voice. The paradox was a discipline focused on encountering other cultures but which reified them as objects of study within the researcher's system of values.[52] For Bakhtin, the principle of encounter is not where the problem lies. Otherness or outsideness is not only a reality of the creative act (see Chapter 3), but also of research in general.

> In the realm of culture, outsideness is a most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of *another* culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly. […] Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and *open* totality, but they are mutually enriched.[53]

The problem lies with the reification of the 'other' as an object, closed-off in a text and denied a response. In this sense, the dialogical encounter goes much further than the production of a polyphonic text and should follow, as it were, the development of ethnographic methodologies like participant-observation in which the roles of both researchers and their subjects are at least acknowledged in the overall production of knowledge, if not made indistinctive.[54] Linking Bakhtinian or dialogical 'participative

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[50] Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology', p. 170.

[51] See George E. Marcus and D. Cushman, 'Ethnographies as Texts', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 11 (1982), 25–69 <doi:10.1146/annurev.an.11.100182.000325>; James Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Authority', *Representations*, 1983, 118–146; George E. Marcus, 'On Ideologies of Reflexivity in Contemporary Efforts to Remake the Human Sciences', *Poetics Today*, 15 (1994), 383–404 <doi:10.2307/1773315>; and Martin Beattie, 'Collaborative Practices', in *Architecture and Field/Work*, ed. by Suzanne Ewing and others (London: Routledge, 2011).

[52] James Clifford puts it succinctly by writing that the predominant mode of modern fieldwork authority can be summed up as 'you are there because I was there.' Clifford, p. 118. The imbalance in this case is an emphasis on the *etic* account (the description or representation from the researcher's point of view) over the *emic* account (the original testimony or material as given, told, written by the subject of study). See Frances Julia Riemer, 'Ethnography Research', in *Research Essentials: an Introduction to Designs and Practices*, ed. by Stephen D. Lapan and Marylynn T. Quartaroli, Research Methods for the Social Sciences (Jossey-Bass, 2009).

[53] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Response to a Question from Novy Mir', in *Speech Genre and Other Late Essays* (Austin, TX: University of Texas, 1986), p. 7.

[54] Again this follows the critique of authority in ethnography which argues for self-reflection (there is no passive objective observer or description, the researcher is a participant in the events witnessed) and the acknowledgement of the subject's own voice in the production of knowledge. Some of the main texts that have influenced my thinking on participant-observation and fieldwork are Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw, 'Participant Observation and Fieldnotes', in *Handbook of Ethnography*, ed. by Paul Atkinson and others (London: SAGE, 2001); Steven Nachman, 'Lies My Informants Told Me', *Journal of*

thinking'[55] with participant action research, Maroussia Hajdukowski-Ahmed highlights three crucial connections:

> 1) the rejection of a dichotomous mode of thinking and of the human subject's reification in knowledge production; 2) the adoption of an exotopic and an empathic position in the act of understanding; and 3) the work's grounding on dialogic communication and the validation of popular knowledge and cultural diversity.[56]

Implied in these three points is a significant resonance with those methods, like interviews, participant-observation and fieldwork, that engage directly with the subject and celebrate the kind of uncertainty inherent in making room for other voices in the thinking and understanding process. Hajdukowski-Ahmed further points out that the dialogical approach has the advantage of implying an ethics of participant research, unifying theory with practice:

> The dialogism that links theory to practice also prevents the reification of action when it is cut off from critical thought and helps to keep both in a state of tension and reciprocal interruption. This dialogism also reduces the power relations that typically hold between the academic researcher and the community participant/research subject, who is often reduced to a mute example.[57]

This type of action might also be called participative, after Bakhtin, as it acknowledges both the researcher's uniquely answerable position in the world as well as its contingence on other people.[58] It acknowledges, in other words, our co-participation in giving meaning to anything.

In the editorial to *AD: Architecture and Anthropology*, Clare Melhuish writes:

> There is a real need for architecture to engage imaginatively with the patterns of life as it is lived in different situations at both the everyday and the celebratory level. […] Anthropology, unlike say, sociology, embraces [the psychological and the metaphysical] dimensions of culture as well as the more banal constituents of existence, and that is why it is important for the practice and theory of architecture.[59]

Anthropological Research, 40 (1984), 536–555; Roy Wagner, *The Invention of Culture* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1975); and William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

[55] 'Participative (unindifferent) thinking is, in fact, the emotional-volitional understanding of Being in its concrete uniqueness on the basis of a non-alibi in Being. That is, it is an act-performing thinking, a thinking that is referred to itself as to the only one performing answerable deeds.' M. M. Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. by Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), p. 44.

[56] Maroussia Hajdukowski-Ahmed, 'Bakhtin Without Borders: Participatory Action Research in the Social Sciences', in *Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, 4 vols. (London: SAGE, 2002), IV, pp. 353–354.

[57] Hajdukowski-Ahmed, IV, p. 355.

[58] See footnote 55 above on participative thinking.

[59] Clare Melhuish, 'Why Anthropology?', *Architectural Design*, 66 (1996), 7–8 (p. 8).

The edition of the magazine responded to work that since the late 1960s had marked a sort of ethnographic turn in architecture and urban studies.[60] The critique toward other approaches, here singling out sociology, is expressed as addressing a lack of engagement with the psychological and metaphysical dimensions of culture and the everyday.[61] While this critique recognises the more direct engagement with the subject inherent to anthropology (both at the large scale of culture and the small scale of the everyday), it remains mostly about the end narratives rather than the methods of knowledge production.[62] However, recent research in architecture has emphasised methodology by looking at interdisciplinary exchanges[63] or by re-evaluating subjectivity in architectural production and reproduction.[64] The recent conference and book *Architecture and Field/Work* addresses the two by exploring architectural production, design and responsibility through their relation to fieldwork—a method well established and theorised in other disciplines but relatively unexplored in architecture.[65] The implications of this methodological revaluation combined with the above critique of action-research and the 'becoming' quality of the Town Square project have influenced, in my own research, the choice of a dialogical approach to architecture where engagement with others, a relational mode of understanding and the co-production of meaning play major roles.

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[60] References to pioneering work in anthropology and architecture in Melhuish's text included Joseph Rykwert, Vincent Scully and Christian Norgberg-Schulz. One of the contributors to the *AD* edition included French anthropologist Marc Augé, author of *Non-Places*. His presence marked a recent turn in urban studies emphasising a move from more traditional and 'exotic' subjects of anthropology to subjects in the urban realm. On this urban turn in anthropology, see Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place: Urban Landscapes as Public History* (MIT Press, 1997); George E. Marcus, *Critical Anthropology Now : Unexpected Contexts, Shifting Constituencies, Changing Agendas*, School of American Research Advanced Seminar Series (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press, 1999); Alain Morel, 'Ethnologie Dans La Ville: Une Bibliographie Indicative', *Terrain*, 3 (2007), 43–54; and D. Miller and F. Parrott, 'Loss and Material Culture in South London', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 15 (2009), 502–519.

[61] No references to works at the intersection of sociology and the built environment are given. If we think of classic texts such as *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs or *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces* by William H. Whyte then the critique appears partially accurate. These texts are not necessarily interested in the psychological or metaphysical aspects of the built environment, but surely present thoughtful studies of urban space through everyday events and trends. For a revaluation of Whyte's work along anthropological lines see Miriam Fitzpatrick, 'Fieldwork in Public Space Assessment', in *Architecture and Field/Work*, ed. by Suzanne Ewing and others (London: Routledge, 2011).

[62] My own academic experience at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture (between 1998 and 2005) had a similar bias toward the symbolic and iconographic aspects of architecture. Pedagogy was strongly predicated on the legacy of architectural historians and critics like Rykwert, Scully and Norberg-Schulz, with heavy emphasis on site and cultural context analysis but very little attention paid to the actual methodologies of engagement.

[63] Architecture has long standing connections to many other disciplines, of course, but here I am referring particularly to the recent trend of interdisciplinary work that involves a revaluation of one's own methods while using methods from other disciplines—in fact what could be expressed as a dialogical exchange between disciplines. Jane Rendell explains this in *Art and Architecture* (pp. 10-11) by drawing on Julia Kristeva's concept of the 'diagonal axis'.

[64] See for example Tim Anstey, Katja Grillner and Rolf Hughes, eds., *Architecture and Authorship* (Black Dog Publishing, 2007); Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till, eds., *Architecture and Participation* (London: Spon, 2005); and Jonathan Hill, *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users* (London: Routledge, 2003).

[65] Suzanne Ewing and others, eds., *Architecture and Field/Work* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 1.

A few things need to be addressed in relation to this interdisciplinary approach before discussing the specific methods used in research. At the outset, the cross-over between Bakhtin's work in philosophy, linguistics and literary criticism, and ethnographic methods allows reflection on the way meaning is constructed for an architectural object or process (what will be defined as an *architectonics* in Chapter 3.2). It questions whether this meaning is fixed, given or singular, or whether its is worked at, negotiated or multiple. Furthermore, implied in this is the belief that these mechanisms are not independent of language. The significance of combining these different approaches for a study of design and public space lies in the relationship between dialogue and space (as developed in Chapter 2.2) and on the immediacy of engagement and on site research.

Given the strong emphasis on language and voice in Bakhtin's dialogism, a note on its relation to text is required, especially in a written thesis. For Bakhtin, a text is 'any coherent complex of signs'.[66] The fact that something can be studied, he writes, means it is a text. 'Where there is no text, there is no object of study.'[67] There is, however, a distinction between a written text and a verbal text. While for Bakhtin each of these may constitute an utterance (located at the boundary between an intention and its realisation, between self and other, or pointing to a previous utterance and an unknown future response), each has its own context which will change depending on its modes of transmission (oral, written, direct, indirect, reported, etc.) and reception. That is, each text is located within a set of dialogical relationships, constructed from the words of others, and cannot fully presuppose the responses it might generate. Even in a written text, as Bakhtin writes, we can hear voices and dialogical relations among them. With regards to the interdisciplinary relationships discussed above, this means uncovering and accommodating the many voices, including the researcher's, that mark the architectonics of the case study and point to the inevitable polyphony of this thesis and the 'messiness' of its text.[68]

My specific methodological approach involved interviews with participants in the project and local residents, fieldwork in Barking (including a month-long residency in one of the project's new flats), participation in local events, the organisation of workshops with local authorities and residents, entertaining a close relationship with muf partners and employees, archival research (including those frustrating chases in filing cabinets, damp basement rooms and messy desks), collecting ephemera and creating my own extensive

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[66] M. M. Bakhtin, 'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 103.
[67] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of the Text', p. 103.
[68] Marcus, 'On Ideologies of Reflexivity in Contemporary Efforts to Remake the Human Sciences', pp. 389–391. The three characteristics of messy texts in ethnography as listed by Marcus are a concern with the spatiotemporal, the absence of a holistic viewpoint outside of research, and incompleteness.

photographic archive. More details on all of these are given throughout the thesis, but I would like to give some thoughts here on two of the most significant of my research materials: my interviews and photographs. These are materials generated by my research itself and are eventually destined for the local Barking archives at Valence House.

From the beginning, research has involved speaking with as many participants in the project as possible.[69] For the most part I have given precedence to one-to-one interviews with people I had contacted beforehand.[70] Consent was granted by the interviewee for each interview, either in written form or audio-recorded. Gaining consent was, in all cases, part of our dialogue, which allowed for open discussions about my work and research, about their contribution and about the ethical aspects of conducting research.[71] These semi-structured interviews were less about fact finding (although some early interviews definitely served that purpose) than getting people to speak about what they thought was significant about public space or how they related to others in the project. A similar approach was adopted when speaking to local residents who had not been involved in the project. The intention of semi-structured interviews was to let interviewees tell me what was important to know, rather than me leading them on about what I wanted to hear—in fact acknowledging that a lot of my research would involve careful listening.[72] In addition to interviews, I organised three workshops on public space, one with representatives from the Council and two with local citizen groups, where the discussion was structured along pre-determined activities.[73] I transcribed each interview and activity in full, feeling it necessary for me to immerse myself in the voices and utterances recorded rather than treating them solely as written texts.

Inclusion of this material in the thesis has been difficult given the nature of dialogue. One of the many challenges of this thesis, particularly with recorded material, has

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[69] There are notable absences in the thesis, including Rob Whiteman, Kieran Long, Martin Brady, Sid Kallar (LBBD), and Mark Lemanski (muf). Their voices are reported from other sources and they are included in Appendix A.

[70] I conducted only two group interviews with local residents and these proved challenging. I found the one-to-one format allowed for a more focused dialogue.

[71] For the majority of my interviews I sent a consent form ahead of time so interviewees could read it over before our meeting. Once together, I clearly explained to my interviewees what the form stated (they gave up copyright, could remain anonymous, and could withdraw consent at any time) and explained why it was important we do this. If I did not have a form prepared, we would record a verbal consent at the beginning of the recording. I found that most interviewees did not feel bothered by this process, in fact most of them seemed relieved by its rigour. I was very careful to respect any wishes by interviewees, stated during or after our interviews, for omissions and edits. When requested, I would send them a full transcript and/or keep their anonymity.

[72] On the role of the interviewer as listener see Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, 'Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2006), pp. 129–142; and Hugo Slim and Paul Thompson, 'Ways of Listening', in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, 2nd edn (Routledge, 2006), pp. 143–154.

[73] Activities included, to name only a few, written questionnaires about the public realm of the Borough and discussions on the relationship between public and private space and the use and management of the new Town Square.

been the constant transposition of verbal text to written text without losing so much of the immediate dialogical situation of interviews. Isolated excerpts from the transcripts lose the contextual richness of what preceded and followed the exchange, often reducing a true dialogic exchange to a monologic sound-bite. Wherever possible (especially with regards to space), I have used extended quotes often including my own responses and questions (extensive excerpts are also found in the appendix when appropriate). The name of every speaker in the thesis is given, and if his or her voice has been recorded in an interview a short description of who they are and how we met is noted in Appendix A. It was important for me to play with the polyphonic quality of the thesis, especially when my primary material for the case study included so many recorded voices. As a general rule during the writing of this thesis, wherever a point could be made by somebody else I used excerpts and quotations.

Over the course of fieldwork I have accumulated close to three thousand personal photographs. The first intention with these was to create an artificial memory of the place in time, close to the use of photography in ethnography.[74] My *fieldphotos*, as I will hereafter call them, served the dual purpose of framing the experienced context (a mode of understanding) and allowing me to revisit Barking at a specific moment in time according to my research needs. The thesis also relies on visual material collected from other sources (sketches, drawings, maps, media clippings, and documents) which are included in the main text and used as evidence. Because of the different nature of personal photographs, I felt the need to mark a difference between collected material and my own. Fieldphotos are thus presented on separate pages, referenced as plates rather than figures and assembled in series apart from the main text as a distinctive 'voice' of the thesis. Each series of fieldphotos follows the chapter to which it most directly relates and thus acts as a visual and rhythmic transition between chapters.[75] Particular fieldphotos were chosen because they help contextualise the discussion (especially for readers not familiar with Barking, see for example plate numbers on the above series of maps), play against the themes of the chapter once these have been laid out in the main text, and offer insights into my fieldwork. Also, in keeping with what Gemma Orobitg Canal argues to be the 'complementary and dialectical relations between image and text, between visual and oral' in ethnographic

[74] Anna Grimshaw, *The Ethnographer's Eye : Ways of Seeing in Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Gemma Orobitg Canal, 'Photography in the Field: Word and Image in Ethnographic Research', in *Working Images: Visual Research and Representation in Ethnography*, ed. by Sarah Pink, László Kürti, and Ana Isabel Afonso (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 31–46; Sarah Pink, László Kürti and Ana Isabel Afonso, *Working Images : Visual Research and Representation in Ethnography* (London: Routledge, 2004).

[75] An explicit decision was made, as per previous work done for my master's thesis *Assembly: A Revaluation of Public Space in Toronto* (University of Waterloo, 2005), that fieldphotos would follow the chapter to which they relate to, thus complementing, locating, but also opening up the preceding discussion. It is relevant, in this sense, that fieldphotos follow the conclusion of the thesis.

research[76], a lot of the plates include both fieldphoto and text, the latter responding or interrupting the former. This allowed me to bring out connections between my visual material, the case study and my continuing research when these could not be included in the main text. In other words, playing with text and fieldphoto made room for dialogues discovered during research in the developing relationships between interviews, collected documents, and first-hand experience of the place without synthesizing them into explanatory paragraphs (see for example Plates 26, 43 and 102).

My research on the Barking Town Square approximately spanned June 2009 and August 2012, coinciding with the final year before the official completion of the project in May 2010 and the first two years of its post-completion life. I became increasingly aware as research progressed of the myriad temporalities involved in my case study: historical descriptions given by interviewees or documents, immediate fieldwork observations, continuing design and development, etc. Eventually, my theoretical framework would be able to make sense of these as part of an evolving dialogue (see the discussion on the *chronotope* in Chapters 2.4, 3.2 and 3.3). In the thesis these different temporalities are intermingled and the text does not follow a linear chronology. However, passages in the text are located in time and with reference to preceding passages where it is most appropriate, fieldphotos captions include dates and Appendix B places each interview in time.

FIRST VOICES

I now want to close the introduction to the thesis by emphasising the importance of the concept of ambivalence as experienced in some early visits to the Barking Town Square. My first interview with Barking residents was on Thursday, July 16 2009, the day of my second visit to the Town Square. I had come a week before and had been told by library staff that I should come back on a Thursday morning when historian Linda Rhodes held her weekly drop-in session to discuss heritage questions. I found Linda near the microfiche readers on the back wall of the library, the first floor of the new Barking Learning Centre (BLC). We spoke for a while, looking at old maps and photographs, before she suggested I speak to an elderly couple that she knew would be participating in the 'coffee-morning' activity downstairs. They, she thought, would be a better source of information for changes specific to the Town Centre (the area of the Town Square and library). She left me for a while and later came back accompanied by Margaret Nicholls, an elderly white woman of about 70. Margaret and I sat down at one of the large round tables of the library and we were soon joined by her husband Ron.

[76] Orobitg Canal, p. 44.

My conversation with the Nichollses is relevant to bring up at this point for three reasons. First of all it is the beginning of my research and my own introduction to the area by local residents. At this point I know in fact very little about the place, even what it might offer as a major case study for my research. The second reason is that even though our conversation lasted just over twenty minutes, the Nichollses bring out what in hindsight are some of the main aspects of my case study. In this brief discussion, we touch on change ('…it *was* really nice in Barking…but it's changed so completely…'), economic decline ('…we used to have a Marks and Spencer's, big shops…'), loss of heritage ('…all this history pulled down…'), planning issues (according to Ron and Margaret the Council cannot make up their mind about pedestrianisation, '…they can't think ahead…'), consultation issues (they both did not take part in consultation, '…we saw the hoarding go up and they said this is what it's going to be…'), politics ('…the Borough seems to be doing things for the people…'), the role of public art in local identity (Ron describes lampposts at the Town Quay with fishing boats and fish, '…all the things that mattered years ago…', Margaret mentions three public sculptures, the first 'ridiculous', the next 'unsightly' and the last 'clever'), demographics and associations ('…she's an Old Barking lady so we have a lot in common…', '…I suppose it's my generation, I might prefer what used to be…'), inclusive and exclusive public space (neither Ron nor Margaret likes the new library but are told that 'youngsters like it'), design aesthetics ('…I'm not impressed by this Travelodge and these flats, I think they're unsightly…'), and finally urban design improvements:

> Yes, now they are trying to do things. They are making the Town Square and they are going to try and do things in the Town Square when before, we didn't even have a Town Square.[77]

The themes brought up in my conversation with the Nichollses precisely fit within the three areas of investigation of this thesis: questions about individual and public identity, questions about public space, and questions about design. As research developed, it appeared that the questions raised by the theoretical model and the case study could be framed according to this tripartite model. The thesis is thus structured into three parts according to the broad questions of who is involved in the process, what they are producing, and how they are producing it.

The final aspect of my conversation with the Nichollses brings out what turned out to be one of the main discoveries of this thesis over and beyond the general themes highlighted above. This was not apparent in the immediacy of our discussion, but reading it a couple of years later brings out the prevailing sense of *ambivalence* implied throughout.

[77] This and all quotes above, INT20090726B.

Whether it is in the case of design aesthetics, public realm improvements, public art or planning issues, both Margaret and Ron are introducing contradictions and doubt into their speech. In a few instances they express differing views on issues, as in the case of the pedestrianisation of Ripple Road, both appreciated and criticised, disliking the library space but noting how popular it is for others or for their own social gatherings, or the glaring contradiction of bemoaning the demolition of heritage (the Victorian swimming baths) while arguing for the good of the Town Square (a project partly enabled by the demolition). Furthermore, it is not only contradictory views that express ambivalence, but the way in which, as they explain things, they will acknowledge (tacitly or not) how something can be two things simultaneously, liked and disliked, defined and undefined, clever and ridiculous, etc. Ambivalence expressed in dialogue is a major theme of this thesis and its foremost conceptual framework. Dialogue, as we will see further, is not only the uncertainty of conversation (figuring and giving meaning to things as one speaks, responds, agrees and disagrees) but also the deeper philosophical concept of inter-subjectivity and alterity common to dialogical theories. The ambivalence present in my dialogue with the Nichollses would re-emerge in the three parts of this thesis, weaving a common thread through alterity, spatial heteroglossia and practical ambivalence.

STRUCTURE

Each of the three main parts is further divided into a similar four-chapter structure. The first chapter introduces the major themes of the part by analysing empirical material from the case study. The second chapter follows by developing the conceptual and more theoretical aspects of the research as they relate to these themes. This introduces Bakhtinian concepts and evaluates them in relation to the empirical material, incrementally constructing, as it were, our dialogical framework for public space design. The third chapter then makes use of this developing framework for a closer analysis of empirical material, reversing the theoretical emphasis of the second chapter. The final fourth chapter closes the part by reflecting on its themes, questions and the implications of the developed framework. It discusses these in a way that sets the stage for the next part

The first part evaluates the identity of participants in the project and its publics through the concepts of alterity and exotopy first (Chapter 3), and then through social heteroglossia (Chapter 4). The second part picks up from the first and explores the relationship between social heteroglossia and our conception of public space. Here, a dialogical framework for understanding public space is developed based on the spatial qualities of Bakhtinian concepts, particularly polyphony and the chronotope (Chapter 7), which is then used to unpack and evaluate the discourses relevant to the Town Square

(Chapter 8). While in these first two parts the emphasis is put on the descriptive qualities of a dialogical framework with regards to identity and public space, in the third and final part the emphasis shifts toward the practical applications of Bakhtin's theory to the design of public space. Part III thus looks at the relationship between practice and policy represented in the Town Square project (from muf and the LBBD) and how these can be re-evaluated to develop a conceptual framework for 'practical ambivalence' based on Bakhtin's early theory of creative activity (architectonics, answerability and co-authorship) supplemented by dialogue, carnival and laughter (Chapter 11). It then evaluates this framework by analysing in detail specific elements and events from the Town Square project (Chapter 12).

The thesis is supplemented by an appendix which gathers empirical material that, while instrumental to the development of my comprehension of the case study, could be located outside the main body of the thesis without jeopardising its argument. This material nevertheless remained crucial, in my opinion, to the reader who may not be familiar with Barking (for example politics and historical material on 'Old Barking'), but also in showing some of the extensive results of fieldwork that could unfortunately not be included in the main body without disrupting its flow or increasing its length beyond requirements. The appendix is arranged in twenty-three sections (from A to W) appearing in the order with which they are referenced in the thesis.

And so we now turn our attention to the identity of individuals and publics, first framing the question with a review of the ceremonies that marked the progress and completion of the Town Square.

Plate 1

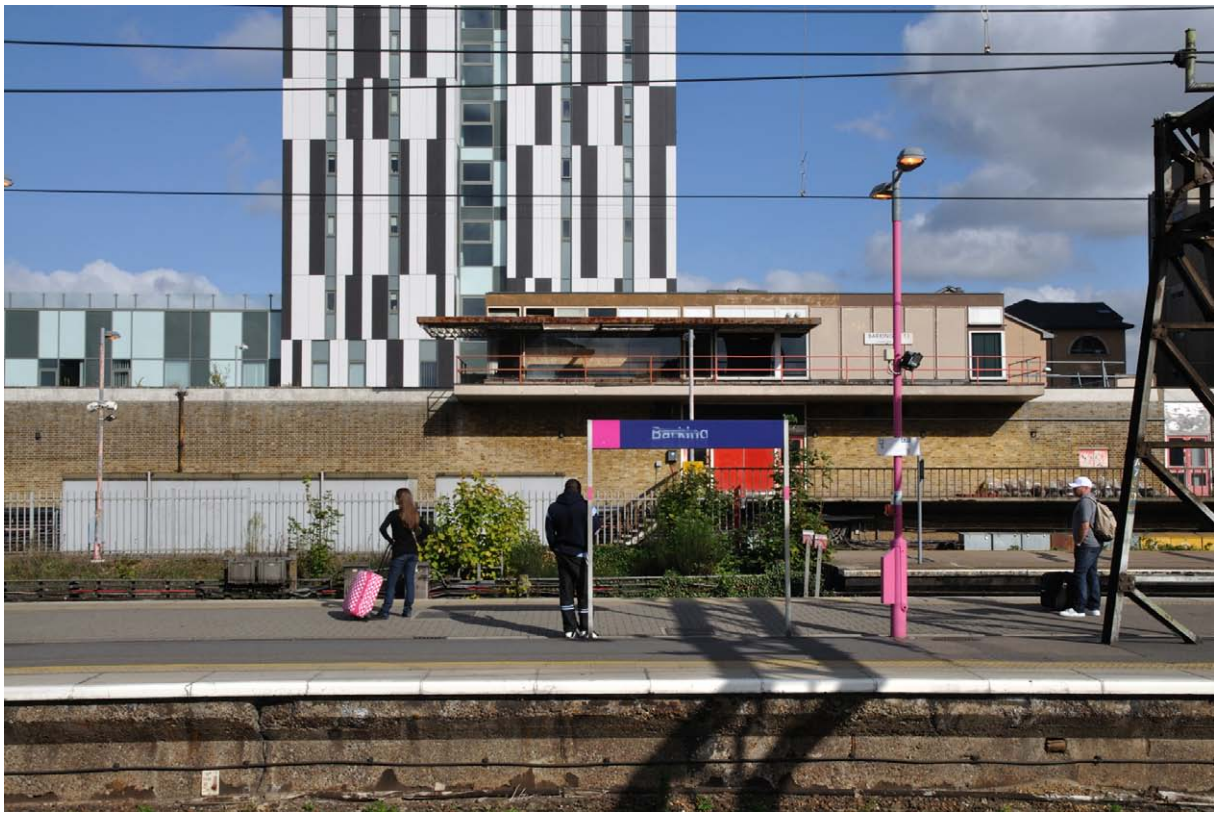
View from Barking Central toward Central London, May 2010.

'The tube heads east, through Whitechapel, Stepney Green, Mile End, Bow Road. Canary Wharf is there in the near distance, but seems like another world. The train passes through post-industrial remains – rusty gasometers, empty canals – and blocks of flats, from inter-war mansion blocks to the great leviathans put up in the 60s. Finally, the landscape opens out into a grey plateau, and you're there: most of the way to Essex, into the borough of Barking and Dagenham.'

John Harris, 'Griffin vs Hodge: The Battle for Barking'.

Plate 2

Barking Station, 2009.



'...A new public space in the very East of London, a destination for any traveller falling asleep on an eastbound Hammersmith and City Line.'

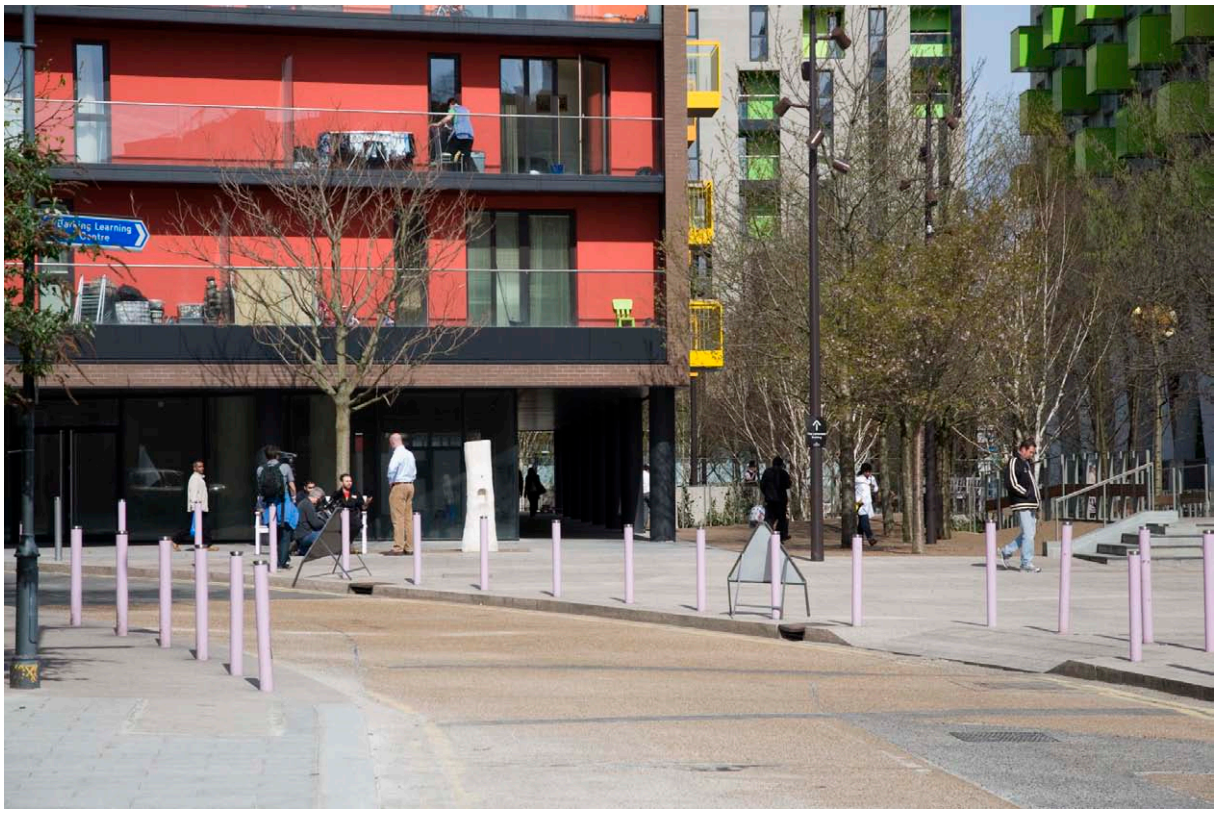
muf, 'Preparations for the Afterlife', p. 17.

Plate 3

Barking Central from the southwest and the enfilade of spaces of the Town Square toward Ripple Road.

Plate 4

Conservative party parliamentary candidate being interviewed at Town Square, April 2010.



'A considered decision was made to match the bulk of the buildings that surround the public space with mature trees up to 12 metres tall on planting. Also mature trees tend to be found in the privileged West of London.
They are arranged in informal clusters grouped as ceremonial backdrop, with its attendant fragile ecology and the melodrama of swamp cypresses and hillocks.'

muf, panel text for Vienna exhibition, March 2009.

'This is a mad thing: Richard Barnbrook had the project of building an indigenous forest in Britain. He's actually an artist. You should meet him. The worst is that he'll probably like the project [Town Square] saying that we copied him!

Liza Fior, INT20091026.

Plate 5

BBC reporters for The Politics Show during the election campaign, Blake's Corner, April 2010.

The shorter one is called A. I ask them if it's their first time here. No, they've been here once before. A sounds like he was here in 2006. They are both from London. 'Born and bred', A says. He soon takes over the conversation. I say I'm doing research. 'On the BNP?' It seems they have a one-track mind. No, on architecture. They say this area, the centre, is pretty ok. I ask A what he thinks of the place. He deliberately (when I think back) steps in front of the cameraman and tells me in a low voice: 'It's a fucking toilet and I hate it. The place is full of angry people.' He's from the south, a southerner he specifies. He says a lot of the anger has to do with housing. 'Go talk to people on the estates, you'll see the anger. I'd be angry if I lived here as well.' He asks me what I think as 'somebody who is not from this land'. I tell him that I think most people harbour unfounded prejudices on the place and its people. A says there are lots of poorer areas that have less problems like Tower Hamlets. I ask them how long they've been here for. They've spent two days, they're just about to pack up.

FN20100304.

Part I

ALTERITY

Figure 2. Barking Carnival at Barking Park, 1914. Source: Valence House

1.1 ABOUT PEOPLE AS WELL

During his speech for the September 2009 ceremony for the opening of phase two of the Town Square (the arboretum, Map 5) and the unveiling of the plaque for the 2008 EPUPS, Rob Whiteman, Chief Executive of the LBBD, reminded the audience that 'the thing of course is that these great new spaces are about people as well.'[78] The official press release covering the ceremony was published the following day, 1 October. The *Barking and Dagenham Post* picked up the release and ran a short article along with a picture of Rob Whiteman on page 17 of its 7 October edition (Figure 3).

Barking and Dagenham Council chief executive Rob Whiteman at the arboretum

Town centre square gets tree cheers

A MINIATURE forest planted in Barking Town Square has been opened at a special ceremony.

The arboretum has 40 mature trees in 16 different varieties and stands outside the contemporary library, apartments and hotel, which have been built in Barking since 2005.

The trees are set in an undulating landscape and there are seating areas on the "forest floor" where people can relax, read or have lunch.

A drinking fountain and a public stage are included within the arboretum.

The opening ceremony last week also marked the unveiling of a plaque naming Barking Town Square as Best Urban Public Space for 2008, as chosen by six architecture bodies across Europe, including the UK's Architecture Foundation.

Figure 3. *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 7 October 2009, p. 17

Mr Whiteman was pictured by the local media speaking from the newly completed stage while motioning over a red ribbon to the arboretum behind him. His comment followed speeches by Mark Brearley of DfL and Margaret Hodge, Labour MP for Barking, who both praised the success and quality of the place and the dedication of everybody involved (Plate 6).

THREE CEREMONIES

The September 2009 ceremony was the second of three that marked the development of the Town Square between 2007 and 2010. These events, which were organised primarily by the LBBD, coincided with the completion of the three phases of the project.[79] They also,

[78] Rob Whiteman, AUD20090930.

[79] The first ceremony on 12 September 2007 marked the completion of phase one of the project, the opening of the library building (Ropeworks), the civic square, the arcade and the Folly (separate commission). It also coincided with the opening of the exhibition *Barking: A Model Town Centre* at the BLC Gallery. The second ceremony on 30 September 2009 celebrated the completion of phase two with the arboretum and the unveiling of a plaque commemorating the Town Square winning the 2008 European Prize for Urban Public Space. It also marked the opening of the *Metamorphosis* exhibition at the BLC Gallery. The third and final

by virtue of their organisation and choreography, serve as a prologue to Part I of this thesis by introducing the theme of inter-subjective relationships that is further developed in the next three chapters. I was present at the last two events where I recorded speeches and took photographs. I had managed to hear about the second event, not from the architects whom I had met previously, but from contacting DfL a day before. When I mentioned I was studying the Town Square, Fenna Wagenaar wondered 'are you going to this event tomorrow' and sent me the invitation herself. It appears that none of the local newspapers announced the event in the weeks preceding it. As mentioned above, the only press release from the LBBD came out on October 1st, one day following the ceremony.

While speeches were being delivered from the stage during the 2009 ceremony, local residents walked through the Square without stopping to listen. A couple in their early twenties pushed a stroller between the invited audience and the speakers, arm around each other never once looking at the stage (Plate 8). 'Who is she?', a man walked up to me and asked of Margaret Hodge. When I told him, the man smiled, shrugged his shoulders and walked away. My experience that day was that rather than express a celebration of regeneration, the ceremony expressed problematic relationships between participants in the project (most of those present) and non-participants, or between those in authority and local residents. It would turn out, after researching the first ceremony through documents and photographs, and attending the third, that all three ceremonies expressed a similar conflict. As will be developed below, these events were run, advertised and represented in ways that highlighted difference and exclusion. Mr Whiteman's reminder that the Town Square is 'about people as well' inadvertently emphasises the exclusivity of the event and the separation between participants and non-participants.

In my interview with former DfL representative Fred Manson, I pointed out how strange it had felt that the event was by invitation only and local people were walking by wondering what on earth was going on. He replied:

> Yes, pushing their trolleys in front of it and wondering what's happening. The time before when we did the opening of the library they brought in a dance group from Barking who was completely outrageous. And they were having a wonderful time. And at least they were local. And there was some attempt at doing a fun event. Of course they didn't even try this time.[80]

In this quote Fred Manson makes reference to the 2007 ceremony for which he judged 'they' (the Council) had tried to do a 'fun event'. That is, some activities other than

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ceremony, taking place on 13 May 2010, marked the completion of the whole Barking Central development. See project timeline in Appendix C.

[80] INT20091009.

speeches included groups of people other than the invited audience. Muf was actively involved in planning and curating the first ceremony which coincided with the opening of the *Model Town Centre* exhibition (see Chapter 12). Part of the organisation of the event included a wider invitation to exterior publics (Figure 4), although this apparently remained within the specialised fields of architecture, urban design and property development.[81]

Figure 4. Invitation card front and back by muf.

The firm was commissioned by the LBBD and produced the setting for the event with a hoarding backdrop for phase two, a full scale mock-up of the future stage and gilt chairs for the audience. The event also included a piper playing on the steps of the completed Folly (Figure 5) and a performance by a local teenage dance group (Figure 7).[82]

Figure 5. Piper playing on steps of the Folly (left) and Fred Manson (right) speaking in front of phase two hoarding, first ceremony. Photos: David Williams

[81] From evidence found on the muf servers three hundred and fifty invitation cards (Figure 4) were supposedly slipped into a September issue of the *Architects' Journal*. Another press release file was found for *Icon* magazine. The exhibition was also advertised through the 2007 London Design Festival running from 15 September to 25 September 2007. On 15 September, tours of the BLC by AHMM and of the Town Square by muf were organised as part of London Open House.

[82] A file found on the muf server named 'event sketch' shows these two moments of the ceremony (piper and dance), the speeches and the gilt chairs located on a plan of the new Town Square. While the photo of the event shows a single male piper playing in front of the Folly, the sketch has the note 'Dagenham pipers' which reveals a possible initial intention of hiring the local all-female piper group.

Seven photographs found on the muf servers have helped reconstruct the choreography and spatial organisation of the event. The photographs were originally commissioned by the LBBD to David Williams, four of which were used in muf's 2008 dossier for the project including the one below (Figure 6). This one shows the assembled audience sitting on gold chairs with the Town Hall in the background. Unseated audience members are lined up along the edge of the Town Hall with very few standing in the open space of the civic square.

Figure 6. Audience assembling before speeches, first ceremony, 12 September 2007. Photo: David Williams

Taken at wide angle and from the elevated platform of the stage, the photo visually reduces the distance between seated audience and Town Hall onlookers. The spatial quality of the moment is dramatically changed if we look at one of the photographs not included in the dossier (Figure 7), with good reasons for its omission.

Figure 7. Dance group performing at the 2007 ceremony. Photo: David Williams

The photo is taken near the steps of the Town Hall toward the stage. The composition of the photo emphasises the empty space of the civic square, the seated audience now appearing isolated, reduced to a small space centre-left. The dancers occupy a slightly larger but still isolated space centre-right. All action in the photograph is compressed to the middle horizontal third. As a celebration of urban regeneration the photograph has evident

failures: gathering clouds over the existing town and seated audience who seem almost insignificant in the space; a group of local performers who appear to be saluting their audience; clear spatial separation between audience and performers; and existing buildings just peeking over hoarding heralding regeneration. The composition is formulaic and depicts an event that appears also too formulaic in its choreography and spatial organisation, emphasising separation and difference over inclusion and openness.

As it turned out, my experience of the second ceremony seemed to apply to the first as well. In fact, the spatial organisation of the three events reveals the same problematic relationship between official participants, stakeholders and local residents. From 2007 to 2010 the ceremonies follow a movement from public to private, from exterior (out on the Town Square) to interior (inside the BLC), from a carefully planned use of the Town Square to no use at all.

The second ceremony was indeed less curated than the first. There were no performances by local residents or external groups, save for the presence of Royal College of Arts (RCA) students since the event coincided with the opening of the exhibition for the *Metamorphosis* project in the BLC Gallery (see Chapter 12). However, Sarah Butler, who co-ran the *Metamorphosis* project, points out on her blog that although library staff and local students had collaborated quite closely in *Metamorphosis* they were nowhere to be seen. Marking her disappointment, she adds 'I really hope people make this space their own.'[83]

Here speeches were delivered from the now completed stage to a standing audience of about fifty (Plate 7). No sign, banner or poster had been put up indicating what the ceremony was about. On the first step leading up to the stage a row of planters had been placed along with two sections of posts and velvet cordon, making a formal division between those on stage and their audience. The first members of the audience stood a good four metres from the first step allowing enough space for passers-by to move through (Plate 8). Behind the speakers was stretched a red ribbon between stage and arboretum. In the latter, a Ping-Pong table made of blue Olympic fence had been temporarily installed.[84] Local teenagers who happened to pass by played throughout the speeches. The whole spatial arrangement thus resulted in an awkward relationship between audience, speakers, and table tennis players. But the separation between civic square, stage and arboretum is not incidental as it is the result of muf's intention to create a sense of distinction between different areas of the project (see Chapter 8). Placing the table tennis table in the arboretum falls into the designers' wish for a playful opposition to the civic

[83] Sarah Butler, 'A Place For Words: Barking Arboretum', *A Place For Words*, 2009, para. 2 <http://aplaceforwordsuw.blogspot.com/2009/10/barking-arboretum.html> [accessed 6 June 2011].
[84] The table was designed by RCA student Will Shannon who also participated in the *Metamorphosis* project.

elements of the Square (arcade, civic square and of course Town Hall). At one point, before the speeches were given, I counted six photographers (professionals and amateurs from the audience) circling the teenagers and taking photographs (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Teenagers playing table tennis behind the stage, second ceremony, September 2009. Photo: Sarah Butler

The majority of the third ceremony took place inside. The only activity that took place on the Square was the taking of an official photograph of the main protagonists in the project (Plate 10). This happened as the rest of the invited audience stayed inside the BLC Gallery where the ceremony was officially taking place. During speeches, speakers stood by the glazed wall of the Gallery, their back to the Square, facing the audience lined up along the opposite wall (Plate 9). In 2007 and 2009 some of the local residents who walked by had a choice of stopping and listening in, asking questions, or playing table tennis. This time, local residents walked by outside, those closest to the glazing looking in (walking to and from the BLC entrance), some puzzled, some grinning. Usually used as a study space by students, the BLC Gallery had been closed off for the afternoon. This was indicated by a note posted at the entrance of the gallery advertising the hosting of a 'private event'.

For this ceremony there was no external presence, neither exhibition launch nor temporary installation. The audience consisted almost entirely of stakeholders, with a noticeable increased presence of representatives from the planning, development and construction industry. While the first event had concentrated on both Square and buildings (the Ropeworks and BLC), and the second solely on the public realm aspects of the project (arboretum and EPUPS), the third marked the completion of the development as a whole and therefore gave precedence to the principal stakeholders of Barking Central.

ABOUT PUBLICS

In his closing remarks to the second ceremony, after reminding us that 'the thing of course is that these great new spaces are about people as well', Rob Whiteman went on to underline the importance of the retail and commercial spaces around the site for regeneration efforts. The overall sense of the event, in its organisation and the rhetoric of its speeches, indeed appeared to emphasise financial investment, commercial activity and gentrification. This was in no way concealed by Margaret Hodge:

> I think [the Town Square] will be the start of making this a very attractive place where people will want to come and spend their money, and businesses will want to come and invest in the place. I think we're beginning to get that right. And if we do, we'll bring a heart back to the centre of Barking.[85]

Third ceremony speeches did not change significantly from the previous event.[86] They focused mostly on official participants in the project and only marginally touched on the significance of those absent. The only speaker to mention community was Peter Andrews. 'We see a really great project, significant benefit for the community. I think it's given the community a renewed sense of pride and confidence.'[87] Tracie Evans (speaking for Rob Whiteman) said how Barking residents deserved this great development. Mayor Charles Fairbrass simply talked of 'youngsters' using the stage for their dance practice. But Peter Bishop raised the bar by stating that this kind of space 'allows citizens just to become citizens' before commenting on how successful regeneration 'changes the lives of people in an area like this.'[88] The references to communities, residents, youngsters, citizens and local people were all spoken, in this case, in their absence. Commenting after the second ceremony, Sarah Butler put it bluntly saying that it is often the case that 'regeneration is regeneration talking about regeneration!'[89]

Given that they were consciously organised as events for the principal stakeholders and official participants, can these ceremonies be seen as public events? Even if they had been publicised it is highly unlikely that they would have attracted many local residents. They all took place during the week and during regular afternoon working hours. Other events have taken place on the Town Square surrounding the official ceremonies (a fair, an artificial ice rink, beach volleyball, the yearly Molten Festival, and others) that were specifically targeting the general public. Although this might inform a counter-critique, the

[85] AUD20090930.
[86] I have no copy or recording of speeches from the first ceremony. For a list of speakers at each ceremony see Appendix D.
[87] AUD20100513.
[88] AUD20100513.
[89] INT20091001.

organisational choices made nevertheless reinforce the separation of these official ceremonies from public events and thus the separation of official participants from local residents.

Being at the second ceremony reinforced, early on in my research project, the significance of relationships in the design and development processes. Although superficial at the time, this impression suggested what became clearer as my research developed—that any approach or framework that seeks to explain and understand the design of public space has to take these relationships into account. More specifically with respect to this section of the thesis, any conception of the public for the Town Square has to acknowledge the contradictions and ambivalence expressed in events like the ceremonies. Looking at the three ceremonies together has shown that the relationships that make up the processes of design are not given, but the result of decisions. That is, the three ceremonies, by virtue of their planned activities, their invited audience and their spatial and temporal choreography, express the construction and division of publics for the Town Square project. These ceremonies are, indeed, about other people as well. The remaining three chapters of Part I develop these considerations further by exploring the relation between the conception of publics and their everyday reality through the Bakhtinian concepts of alterity, exotopy and social heteroglossia.

Plate 6

Speeches for the opening of the arboretum, September 2009.
On stage from left to right: Rob Whiteman, Margaret Hodge, and Mark Brearley.

Too often regeneration is Regeneration talking about regeneration.

Sarah Butler, INT20091001.

Plate 7

Ceremony for the opening of the arboretum, September 2009, front and back of stage.

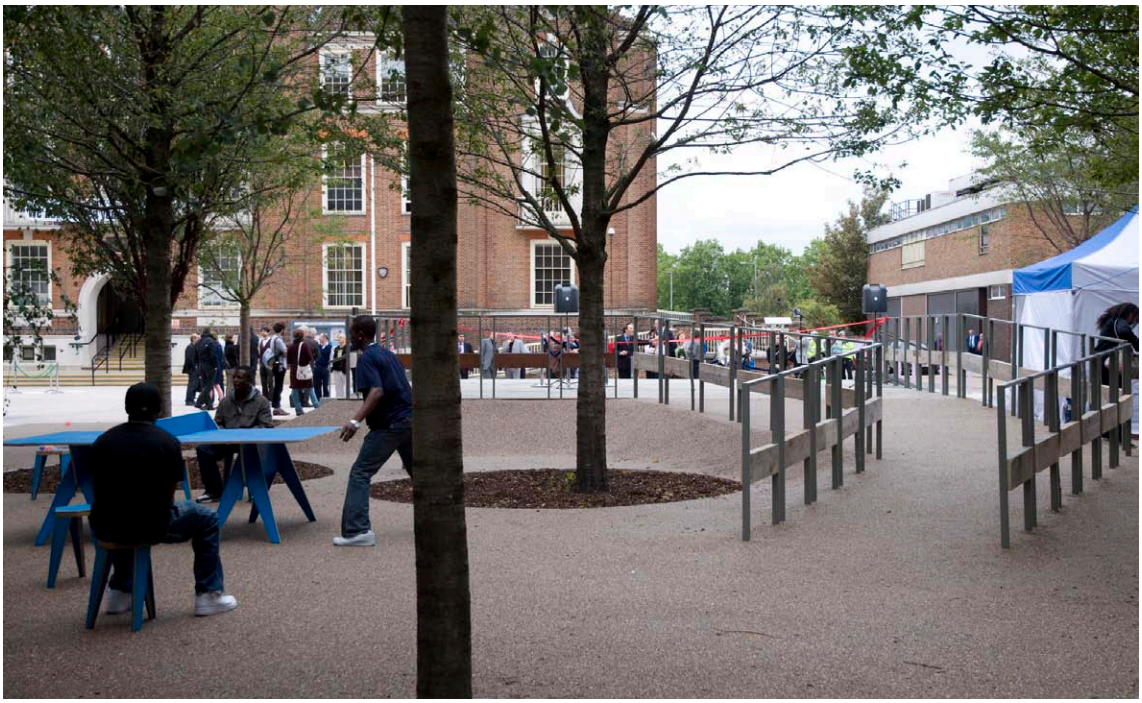

Plate 8

Ceremony for the opening of the arboretum, September 2009, with local residents walking by.

Plate 9

Speech by Mayor Fairbrass for the completion of Barking Central, May 2010.

Panel placed at the entrance of the BLC Gallery:

Thursday 13/5/2010
The gallery will not be available as a
study area today as it is hosting a
private event
We apologise for any inconvenience

Plate 10

Dignitaries gathering for an official photograph, May 2010.

During the celebration for the completion of Barking Central a few dignitaries walked out onto the Square to have their photo taken. The point at which they are standing, in relation to the photographer and the project, is on the central axis running through the arboretum and the Lemonade tower. Present are (from left to right) Jeremy Grint, Peter Andrews, Peter Bishop, Tracie Evans (for Rob Whiteman), Peter Green, Paul Monaghan and Mayor Charles Fairbrass.

1.2 THE INVENTION OF PUBLICS

> Each epoch, each literary trend and literary-artistic style, each literary genre within an epoch or trend, is typified by its own special concepts of the addressee of the literary work, a special sense and understanding of its reader, listener, public, or people.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin[90]

In what ways do we conceive of a public when designing for the public realm? As the example of the ceremonies in the last chapter started to show, this conception is contingent on decisions and actions that express valued relationships between people. In other words, the inter-subjective structure of design processes express particular conceptions of individuals and publics. Drawing an analogy with Bakhtin's quote above, we can say that each epoch, each architectural trend and architectural style, each architectural genre within an epoch or trend is typified by its own special concepts of the addressee of the architectural work, a special sense and understanding of its user or public. This chapter develops this idea by looking specifically at the conception of participants and publics in the Town Square project and adapting Bakhtinian concepts dealing with identity and inter-subjectivity to design processes. In my research, two things became quickly evident with respect to this approach that raised concerns about fixed categories and roles, and the consequences of actions with respect to the identity of publics and other participants. The first was that a project for public space raises these concerns more acutely since it lacks a particular function or single purpose and, consequently, is rarely designed with a specific public in mind.[91] The second was that problems arise when strict classification is used to define participants in the architectural project, failing to capture the often fuzzy boundaries between, say, designers, clients, users and the public.[92] What happens, for example, if a client is also a user, or, more significantly for public space, the specificity of a known user is lost in the abstract generality of 'the public'?

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[90] M. M. Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 98.

[91] On this point, Banerjee and Loukaitou-Sideris write that the contradictions inherent to this type of project (between public and private, or between groups with conflicting interests) make difficult the evaluation of what good and appropriate design is. Tridib Banerjee and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, *Companion to Urban Design* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2011), p. 275.

[92] Here I am thinking specifically of Paul Jenkins and Leslie Forsyth's study on participation in architecture based on the strict classification of designer, client, user and public. Paul Jenkins and Leslie Forsyth, eds., *Architecture, Participation and Society* (Taylor & Francis, 2010).

ALTERITY

A dialogical conception of the public

In my three interviews with Liza Fior, her conception of the public for the Town Square appears remarkably fluid. Although it seemed like at any point her conception included local residents, the developer, the contractor, and the Council, there was a notable change in attitude over our three interviews from emphasising local residents and the Council at the beginning and giving more emphasis to the developer near the end. In my first interview with Liza Fior, in October 2009, she explains that although muf was under contract from the developer (Urban Catalyst (UC) or Redrow), she felt that ultimately it was the Council who was their client. While Liza mentions that with the Council muf had a relationship like 'some weird family tie', she notes that in moments they 'just ignored Redrow.'[93] At the same time, she mentions that muf 'identify with the user-victim of Barking who is being imposed regeneration.' Adding that 'in some way we are advocates of the user.'[94] The evidence from our first interview, coupled with the actual development of the project, shows that a first phase of defining the public for the Square involved seeing the developer, the actual client and employer of the design firm, as an obstacle to be negotiated.[95] As Liza Fior states:

> Everything was strategic. We made [the civic square] really bland on purpose so that there would be nothing to dislike. There was nothing there for anybody to object to.[96]

But this position shifts over time. In our December 2010 interview, I asked Liza:

> The last time we spoke you said you identify strongly with the public of Barking on whom design is imposed. How do you start defining who the public is?
>
> Liza Fior: There was an interesting question at the last presentation: 'is the client the public, is Redrow the public?' Well of course Redrow is the public.[97]

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[93] The firm's close relationship with key Council employees like Jeremy Grint, Peter Watson and Jennie Coombs was also brought up several times in interviews with all parties.
[94] INT20091026.
[95] Liza identifies the negotiation for Spanish granite over Chinese as the 'first fight' of the project. Muf worked closely with Peter Watson, LBBD civil engineer, in order to convince the developer. 'Peter was very involved in getting us these sign-offs. For example forcing Redrow into letting us choose the granite (INT20091026).'
[96] Liza Fior, INT20091026. This strategy was directed primarily at the developer. See Chapter 3.2 and Liza Fior and Katherine Clarke, 'Preparations for the Afterlife: Barking Town Square Muf Architecture/art', in *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Women in Architecture*, ed. by Lori A. Brown (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2011), pp. 333–346.
[97] INT20101207.

When I further pressed her to comment on how they defined the potential users of the space, those she mentioned they identified with, she first commented on what she believed to be 'very loaded questions' before adding:

> What's important, there, is that the public is who [the project is] handed over to and who is at the meetings.[98]

Emphasis is now put on the official participants and clients of the project. The developer markedly re-enters the designer's conception of the public. 'Who was the public extends to Redrow because of the multiple sign-offs that we needed.'[99] She continues by saying that in the last phase of the project muf 'tempered' their stance (which, as we saw, had been lightly adversarial to begin with) because they realised how important it was for the developer to get the go ahead from the Council and, ultimately, for the project to come to a close.

> They should very much get the go ahead, it was important. That's a moment when we actually did give [Redrow] a voice by being a little bit more cautious than they would allow us to be.[100]

Yet this tempering was partly caused by a shift in the position of the developer with regards to muf themselves. While at the beginning Redrow may have been 'stretched' by muf[101], by sign-off the relationship appeared more balanced. As Liza commented:

> [Project manager] John King was very supportive, and by the end of it we could have almost gone further than we went.[102]

Over the course of the project muf had so much interaction and engagement with AHMM, the Council, the developers and the contractors (as opposed to others outside the official participants) that their importance as publics increased significantly. Although this change in conception was marked chronologically in my interviews it is arguable that a more complex position existed during the entire project. That is, any design act was made in relation to a transforming set of relations between designers and others (being 'double agents' or 'agents of funding'[103], consultants to the developer or to AHMM, representatives of the 'user-victims of regeneration', and so forth) and responding to a varying set of demands (some real, some invented).

In the above example, Liza Fior and her conception of a public for the Town Square cannot be dissociated. That is, the description that she gives of the public is a result of her interaction and dialogue with various other participants in the project, local residents

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[98] INT20101207.
[99] Liza Fior, INT20101207.
[100] Liza Fior, INT20101207.
[101] Jeremy Grint, INT20091005.
[102] INT20101207.
[103] Liza Fior, 'Tailgating as Municipal Housekeeping' (University College London, 2007).

and imagined users.[104] Near the end of the project, as she said above, muf 'gave Redrow a voice' so that muf's own actions were now in relation with the developer's subjective approach to the project (caution, according to Liza) rather than reactions to an adversarial entity. While this might simply describe the dynamics of dialogue (by giving response, reacting to the other's actions), it nevertheless brings out the way one entity can be defined according to its relationship to another. What this further suggests is an identity based on dynamic relations rather than fixed relations. In Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, this is of crucial importance because, as Clark and Holquist note, dialogism supports the notion that to be is to respond, and so an entity stripped bare of these relations cannot be said to have subjective reality.[105] In contrast, when the other is given voice, as Liza Fior reports muf did for Redrow, their engagement becomes dialogical.

According to dialogism, then, the identity of participants in the project has to be conceived otherwise than solely according to functional, contractual, statistical or abstract roles. An architect is never just an architect, nor is a client ever just a client. Their respective identity is contingent on their particular relationship with each other. In other words, it is possible to define the identity of participants according to what Tzvetan Todorov identifies as the fundamental principle of dialogism:

> This is then the fundamental principle: it is impossible to conceive of any being outside of the relations that link it to the other.[106]

The importance of acknowledging connections to others in dialogism, Todorov notes, is because for Bakhtin, inter-subjectivity always precedes subjectivity.[107] The dialogic principle of alterity, then, suggests that an entity (a person, an organization, a project) can only be understood when taking into account its interaction with others. Liza Fior's conception of the public is contingent on the relationships that structure the project while simultaneously reflecting back on her own identity. Indeed throughout my research project the identities of participants in the project and its publics felt inadequate when described only along fixed, say contractual or functional, lines. Theory and evidence suggested a conception beyond the strict categories of architect, client, user or public. Thus the principle of alterity for the architectural process can be stated as: it is impossible to conceive of any participant outside of the relations that link them to others.

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[104] While these comments by Liza Fior came up in interviews with me and in independent circumstances (lectures and publications) they still cannot be dissociated from their intended audience in the field of architecture. The anecdote at the end of Chapter 3.4 with Kieran Long shows how her stance changes when the audience is a potential client.

[105] See Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 67.

[106] Todorov, p. 94.

[107] Todorov, p. 30. This is also the position of other dialogical thinkers Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas who recognise the prime of inter-subjectivity and difference in identity formation.

> A subject as such cannot be perceived and studied as a thing, for as a subject it cannot, while remaining a subject, become voiceless, and, consequently, cognition of it can only be *dialogic*.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin[108]

The immediacy of dialogue and of the dialogical encounter undermines the idea that an individual or a group can be given a fixed identity. Abstract categories like users tend to be, as Jeremy Till notes, the creation of experts in order to push their own agenda or defend their territory.[109] The authority of the experts is destabilised, however, as soon as abstract categories, like the user or the public, are given any form of concrete subjectivity. The echo with Bakhtin's quote above is that individual users or publics, if they are to have subjective reality, neither can remain voiceless nor be denied the capacity to respond. Although he is writing about the particular case of post-war architecture, Adrian Forty describes what can be taken as a general rule for all fixed conceptions of individuals or groups:

> The 'user' was always a person unknown—and so in this respect a fiction, an abstraction without phenomenal identity. The 'user' does not tolerate attempts to be given particularity: as soon as the 'user' starts to take on the identity of a person, of specific occupation, class or gender, inhabiting a particular piece of historical time, it begins to collapse as a category. Deprived of its abstract generality, its value disintegrates; for its merit is to allow discussion of peoples' inhabitation of a building while suppressing all the differences that actually exist between them. Describing them simply as 'the users' strips them, or any sub-group of them, of their discordant, non-conformist particularities, and gives them a homogeneous—and fictional—unity.[110]

As is succinctly put by Forty, projecting emancipation on an abstracted group of users amounts to negating this very emancipation because it rids an individual person or group of everything that might make them real: gender, age, political inclination, financial status, kinship relations, motivations, intentions and perhaps more importantly the capacity for subversion and dissent. All this and more is sacrificed for the sake of a 'fictional unity'.[111]

Jonathan Hill, who in his conception of users draws from Forty, classifies users into three categories (passive, reactive and creative) to give some sense of how differently

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[108] 'Toward a Methodology', p. 161.
[109] I met Jeremy Till in London in May 2011. He had just given the talk 'Would the Real User Please Stand Up' at *Before and Beyond : Architecture and the User*, University of Buffalo, April 2011. Our conversation was not recorded as an official interview.
[110] Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings: a Vocabulary of Modern Architecture* (Thames & Hudson, 2000), p. 312.
[111] On the problematic unity of abstracted individuals or groups see Chapter 1.3.

some users respond to the architecture they are occupying.[112] The key of this categorisation is that in recognising that users may be creative the architect (who keeps his/her authority) may (or may not) change their practice to suit. The conundrum of this approach is the creation of more abstract categories for types of users as a remedy for a wholesale abstraction of all users. However precise these special categories are, the users they represent are still disembodied and abstracted from subjective reality. An architect who undermines his/her own authority by designing for creative users projects the idea that all users might want to participate actively and equally in the transformation of their environment.

Direct engagement between designers and users is one way in which individuals and groups retain their 'phenomenal identity' and what has been the general aim of participatory practices in architecture.[113] The effect of abstract categories and fictional identities is reduced, then, in the dialogical encounter where those involved have the capacity to act and respond. Yet, the evidence of muf's engagement with others during the project shows how engagement tends to be partial and selective, both in those involved and in the manner of their involvement. Their meetings with the Afro-Caribbean Lunch Club, students from Gascoigne Primary, students from Barking and Dagenham College, other designers like Jurgen Bey or RCA design students, Council officials from various departments, or the librarians from the BLC, were prescribed encounters with particular groups.[114] We cannot dissociate this partial engagement from Liza Fior's comment, earlier stated, that muf see themselves as 'advocates of the user'[115]. The user, here, hovers between ideal projection and direct experience with these select groups. It is neither a mute entity, nor is it somebody who fully speaks for themselves. This ambivalence, however, is precisely what underpins an understanding of participants according to alterity and inter-subjectivity in which we are simultaneously dealing with fixed categories and evolving identities. While we will return to the idea of *dialogic identity* at the end of Chapter 4, the following section explores some of the mechanisms that characterise the processes of identification in the project.

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[112] Hill makes an analogy between architect-building-user relations and author-text-reader relations drawing on Roland Barthes' essay 'The Death of the Author'. Jonathan Hill, 'The Use of Architects', *Urban Studies*, 38 (2001), 351 –365 <doi:10.1080/00420980123765>; and Hill, *Actions of Architecture: Architects and Creative Users.*

[113] Adrian Forty notes that the conception of users in relation to the welfare state was contrasted by those conceptions, like the one of Herman Hertzberger, who sought the emancipation of actual people (Forty, p.314). In this case, Giancarlo de Carlo's definition of architecture's public as emancipated users collaborating with architects is another example of the critique of the time and the development of participatory practices. Giancarlo de Carlo, 'Architecture's Public', in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till (London: Spon Press, 2005), pp. 3–22; also Peter Blundell Jones, 'Sixty-eight and After', in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till (London: Spon Press, 2005), pp. 127–140.

[114] Some of these encounters are described in detail in Part III.

[115] INT20091026.

EXOTOPY

The public as movement patterns and imagined activities

In both the 1999 and 2004 briefs for the Town Square project the public is noticeably absent. Or rather, its identity is expressed obliquely by references to movement (access), safety, and possible activities (uses and infrastructure). In 1999:

> The aim of the Town Square Refurbishment project is to create a beautiful, enjoyable and useable civic space that can be transformed when needed into an area for performances of all types.[116]

And in 2004:

> With the focus on change and the provision of new homes in the Borough, creating a new 'heart' that provides a sense of place and which reinforces the identity of the town centre are essential aspects of the regeneration of Barking.[117]

Each passage implies an identity using altogether different language. In the first the Town Square is to draw its identity from the civic core of the Town Centre. In the second, the Town Square becomes a 'heart' that provides a 'sense of place'. Yet in neither document is this identity linked to an idea that the community of Barking has any particular subjective identity. Although the 2004 document mentions the need to provide a 'sense of place' that reinforces the identity of the Town Centre, it never gives some sort of subjective qualifier to the resident population. This one is abstracted into references to movement, safety and potential activities. The public, in each document, does not have a particular identity but is an abstraction onto which imagined actions have been projected.

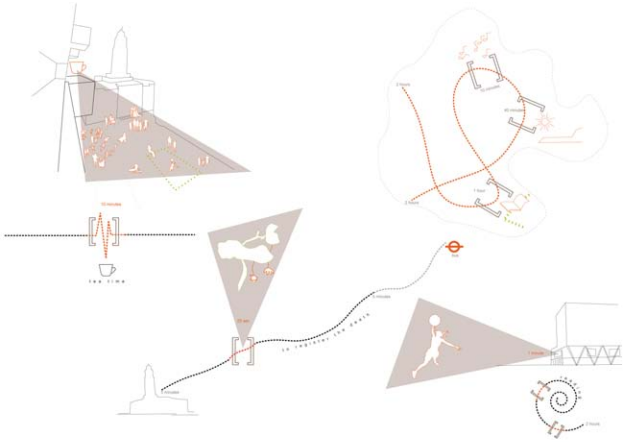

Figure 9. 2004 interview drawing by muf showing potential uses for the Town Square according to time.

[116] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Development and Architectural Design Competition Barking Town Square' (LBBD, 1999).
[117] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's Objectives and Requirements for the Public Spaces Associated with the Town Square Development', 2004.

This concurs with the first conception of the public by the designers. A drawing from muf's interview for the Town Square project shows how possible uses over time of the Square are projected onto its potential users (Figure 9). Ultimately, this is seen by the jury as a sign that muf was 'likely to engage well with the local community' and 'demonstrated that they were already thinking laterally about the way in which the space may be used.'[118] In fact, at this point muf had had no contact with the local communities of the Town Centre. Their only other project realised in the Borough had been at Scratton Farm further east, an area with little relation to the Town Centre. Eventually, one of muf's first conceptual drawings for the project after they were commissioned is also an abstraction of movement and activity, this time represented in plan form (Figure 10). This drawing kept coming back in slide presentations by muf as their first analytical drawing. It shows major access routes in dark red arrows, interaction with surrounding buildings in orange, and visual links in light blue.

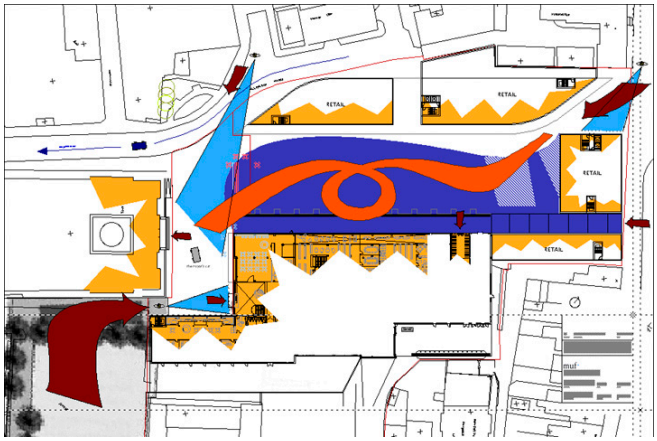

Figure 10. 2005 muf diagram of movement across the site.

The same abstracting approach is taken by the building architects AHMM. During our interview, Paul Monaghan answers the question about research into Barking with movement patterns and historical information about the site.

> TBK: When you say 'we look at movement on site, look at people passing through' can you describe that research?
>
> Paul Monaghan: [Showing me an early sketch of the project.] We wanted to come outside the Magistrates Court, we wanted to get a link through the ground floor there and from the shopping centre here. They [the Council] wanted that opening so that's why that diagonal, which is not my favourite part of the building we've designed, but anyway that's where it's from. So that was setting out the public realm. You can see

[118] From Martin Brady's post-interview notes found at LBBD Regeneration entitled 'Town Square Landscape Architect Appointment' (2004).

> here, and this is a couple of years before Liza, but there is a square here and there is something along there with an arcade.[119]

He describes the public realm in terms of movement, space and volumes, but never in terms of social interaction:

> Routes here, big space here, big space there, something tall there, library and police station here, and allowing things to knit through.[120]

Paul Monaghan continues outlining the criteria that make up their design process: context (physical or political), making and surface.[121] He never mentions, however, research on who their target public is. When pressed on engagement with local residents, he admits that they did 'remarkably little public consultation.'

> We had the odd exhibition but we didn't ask people what they wanted. The Council wanted… I think a lot of schemes have been stopped by too much consultation.[122]

The relations he does talk about are with Council officials, the developer and other design professionals. An abstraction of the public does find its way into some of AHMM's first drawings in 2002, though, with tiny people dispersed according to movement, access and landmark attractions (see Figure 31 in Chapter 8).

Imagined publics and personas

Renderings of the project by both AHMM and muf, usually at ground level, show a similar reliance on using scaled representations of people, abstracted from their context and reinserted into their own renderings as indicative of both scale and activity (Figure 11 and Figure 12).

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[119] INT20100507.
[120] INT20100507.
[121] INT20100507. Paul mentioned there were five criteria but only gave three. I suspect he may have been referring to a version of the thematic breakdown of Iain Borden's AHMM book: no-style, surface, getting things done, landing, interacting and spacing. 'Getting things done' and 'landing' could be translated as making and context. Iain Borden, *Manual : the Architecture and Office of Allford Hall Monaghan Morris* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2003).
[122] INT20100507.

Figure 11. AHMM rendering of the BLC and Ropeworks building around January 2004 before muf appointment. Original rendering is at left with detail at right.

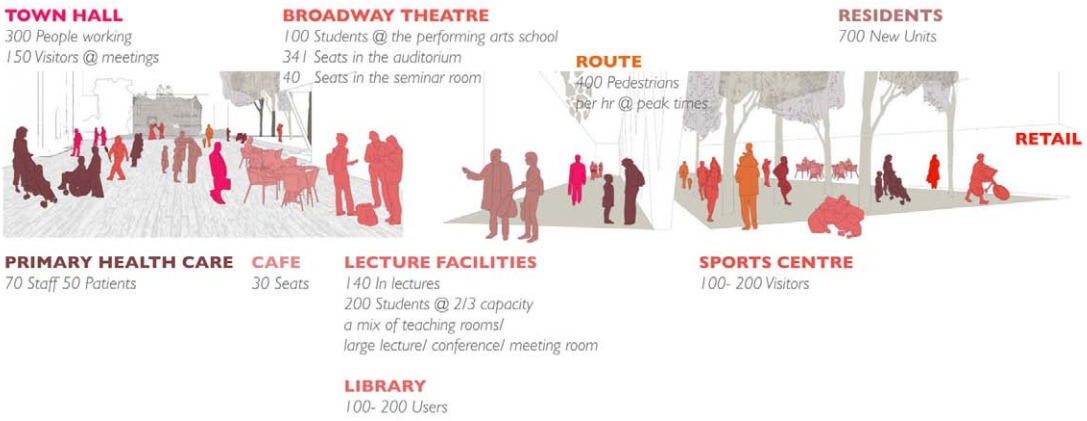

Figure 12. Use diagram by muf showing potential uses for the Town Square.

The difference between the AHMM and muf renderings above has to do with their respective projections of publics into the space. The people inserted into the AHMM rendering at ground level do not appear indicative of action, purpose, or specific publics but rather of general activity and presence. They indicate the presence of a large open space, but defer to the main focus of the image, which is the building. Only three people appear on the façade of this one, each in a different flat (Figure 11 right). They again appear there as a general indication of spatial occupation, but do make certain claims about the imagined publics of the final project: three young white persons (in three different flats) with a taste for large canvases hung on walls and modern furniture. The rendering was included in the September 2004 reserved matters application to the LBBD for the Ropeworks building, its goal being the indication of exterior materials and colours, hence the emphasis on the building's east façade. However, I use it here to mark the difference between different approaches to working with imagined publics in the design process. The rendering, while it may not actively demonstrate how imagined publics are dialogically affecting design, nevertheless shows the connection between the imagined publics of regeneration (young, financially stable individuals), the calculus of development (an abundance of one and two-

bedroom flats, maximisation of profits according to rentable space) and the aesthetics of the projected building (especially surface and colour).[123]

The dialogue between design proposal and projected publics becomes more evident with muf's rendering (Figure 12). Again, this is partly because muf are designing the public realm and will therefore represent people according to the perceived activities their design proposal is supporting, but also because supporting the relationship between design and projected publics is one of the intentions of this particular drawing. Indeed, muf explained how a series of these occupation drawings were used during the switch from UC to Redrow to convince the new developer of the value of the public realm.[124] Here, represented people are given purpose: going to the library, working at Town Hall, using the Square as a short cut, etc. The colour scheme of the drawing also suggests that the projected publics are understood simultaneously as both individuals and groups (this idea is developed further in Chapter 4). The inclusion in the drawing of a Broadway Theatre group is interesting because it follows a project muf did in collaboration with local performing arts students (see first hoarding project in Chapter 12). Although it does express potential use, an indication of some of the thinking process that influenced the design, interaction with local residents, or a valuation of the public realm for the developer and its projected publics, the drawing still remains abstract. This is because its represented publics are still abstracted into general activity groups and movement patterns rather than being given engaging personas; personas we might understand, as will be seen below, as unfinalised and destabilising.

Reflecting on the relationship between design and use, William Fawcett writes that 'effectively, the user is "invented" by designers and then used by them as an actor.'[125] This invention and play-acting process, however, is not a concept that is widely written about in architectural discourse. What Fawcett is describing, and what we have started to see evidenced in the Town Square project, is nevertheless developed in more general theories of design like Persona-Based Design (PBD).[126] The main principle behind PBD is that during the design process designers will invent characters or 'prototypical users with names,

[123] In reference to a *Blueprint* article on Barking Central, Paul Monaghan commented how the treatment of the façades (especially the colours) was judged a responsible response to cultural diversity. See Abrahams, 'Barking Central'. Iain Borden, writing in relation to AHMM's work, comments that surface 'is one of the possible moments by which architecture enters into the urban and social realm.' Borden, *Manual*, p. 57.
[124] Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw, INT20091026.
[125] William Fawcett, 'Architecture: Functional Approach or the Case for User Research', *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 1 (1996), 8–15 (p. 9).
[126] For a good overview of PBD see Ingbert R. Floyd, M. Cameron Jones and Michael B. Twidale, 'Resolving Incommensurable Debates: a Preliminary Identification of Persona Kinds, Attributes, and Characteristics', *Artifact*, 2 (2008), 12–26.

faces, interests and preferences' that will stand in for actual users.[127] It is argued that PBD is more effective than other design approaches because it more effectively focuses on the relationship between design and use[128] but that one needs to be aware that stereotyping might be inevitable when using personas in the design process.[129] This last comment is a reminder that a certain degree of abstraction inevitably occurs when reducing complex social and cultural relationships to fictional unities (users, user groups or publics). By focusing on the relationship between design and use, PBD significantly emphasises acting over filling-in predetermined functional positions. For example, Jonathan Hill's tripartite categorisation of users (reactive, passive, creative) is a limited reflection of personas that only starts affecting the design process dialogically once these personas are given agency, names, backgrounds, desires, actions, voices. By focusing on the act, a degree of uncertainty is brought into the process that can then reflect back onto design decisions. That is, imagined users and publics are dialogical in their capacity to destabilise the intentions of the designer. Somebody who sits on a bench only fulfils a functional role given by the designer. But a local resident who sits on a bench after having registered the death of a family member questions the designer's intentions and the final form of the design.[130] The more involved the destabilising presence of imagined publics is registered in design, the more these dialogically affect its outcome.

There were indeed certain moments in my conversations with muf when the invented publics were given more subjectivity than renderings can represent. In the following quote, Liza Fior describes how specific personas were directly related to design decisions and how an abstract public acquires subjectivity:

> The public is the tired miserable person as much as it is the child playing. I'd say that the forty-five year old man working in property with quite a substantial pension is designed-in. And I would say that he was designed-in, in the first brief, in the idea of durable materials, and no warranties, benches that look like benches. He's there.[131]

For Liza Fior this 'designed-in' process is inevitable and she makes the point that a member of the public does not need to be involved in decision-making to be represented. As she comments in relation to sign-off meetings: 'We brought the public with us. […]

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[127] Adrienne L. Massanari, 'Designing for Imaginary Friends: Information Architecture, Personas and the Politics of User-Centered Design', *New Media & Society*, 12 (2010), 401 –416 <doi:10.1177/1461444809346722>.
[128] John Pruitt and Jonathan Grudin, 'Personas: Practice and Theory', in *Proceedings of the 2003 Conference On Designing For User Experiences* (New York, NY: ACM, 2003).
[129] Phil Turner and Susan Turner, 'Is Stereotyping Inevitable When Designing with Personas?', *Design Studies*, 32 (2011), 30–44.
[130] Muf's interview diagram depicting possible uses for the future square shows the itinerary of someone walking from Barking Station to Barking Town Hall to register a death and resting for a moment in the arboretum to look at plants and trees (Figure 9).
[131] Liza Fior, INT20101207.

They were part of that sign-off. They were simply in our own consciousnesses.'[132] Although the point is made forcefully, it does support the idea that the invention of publics occurs throughout design processes. Whether or not the architect is consciously representing imagined or real people, they are inevitably projecting their own conception of publics onto the project.

Outsideness and creative activity

There is more, however, to Liza Fior's invention of publics and personas. Her comments imply that this invention is paralleled by an experience of the project from the point of view of others. 'I'm always thinking about the person who is really miserable…'[133] This is also evidenced in the quote below by Alison Crawshaw in the context of an exchange on imagining use and behaviour in the new Town Square. Here, Alison compares her projections of use with those of a Council officer worried about safety in the Square:

> TBK: Do you feel it was a problem not to have a specific user group?
>
> Alison Crawshaw: It was quite a strange thing to work on, but the ideas behind it were very very strong and they sort of carried it. […] With the library you can imagine somebody reading quietly on a bench amongst the trees. The times when it became a problem not having a user group were when we actually had to sign things off with the Council, because you know the range of activities… How do you decide risk when you have murderers walking through the arboretum! [laughs] That's the kind of level of conversation! You know what I mean? What's a risk? 'Oh it's a risk that someone might hide behind a tree and jump out and do…' Well anything is possible if you don't know who's going to be in your space! [laughs] You can't predict behaviour.[134]

While the designer imagines her own appropriate uses of the space it is otherwise with the concerns she chooses to report from the Council. She engages here in a process of imagining the activities of characters found in the area of the project she is designing. At the same time she also attempts to experience the Council's own projection of use for the Town Square—which either confirms, or, in this case, destabilises her own.

The process of conceiving, and relating to, others who might use the future project is characteristic and fundamental to design and, as it were, to any form of creative activity. As evidenced in the Town Square project this process may take many forms, as in imagining movement patterns and activities, inventing personas, consulting with local residents or doing art projects. It is possible, as was shown in the first section of this chapter, to frame these activities according to alterity: mechanisms of engagement are put

[132] INT20101207.
[133] Liza Fior, INT20101207.
[134] INT20100929.

in place to narrow the subjective differences between participants and increase their knowledge of each other by creating or affecting relationships in the project. Yet the evidence just given (Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw imagining other points of view) shows another deep connection between design authorship and dialogism in the way designers negotiate the possibilities and constraints of use and occupation. In Bakhtin's theory, experiencing from another's point of view, or co-experiencing as he defines it, is a necessary stage of any creative activity.

In his early texts on ethics and aesthetics Bakhtin explores the process of aesthetic (creative) activity from the basis of inter-subjective relationships. His theory of authorship, of relations between author and hero, is shown to be an extrapolation of his theory of subjectivity, of relations between self and other.[135] Relating to the other, picturing them or imagining their actions, involves giving them form—what Bakhtin expresses as authorship.[136] Imagining the other though does not involve coinciding with the other. Bakhtin criticises the notion of true empathy at length, stating that it is impossible given each and everyone's unique position in time and space—no one can ever be simultaneously situated with the other so that both experience the exact same thing.[137] He instead argues that it is outsideness—what Todorov translates as *exotopy*— that is the fundamental condition of authoring. It is only from an outside position, Bakhtin writes, that we are able to give form or meaning to a person or an event:

> There are events which are in principle incapable of unfolding on the plane of one and the same consciousness and which presuppose *two* consciousnesses that never merge. Or, in other words, what is *constitutive* for such events is the relationship of one consciousness to *another* consciousness precisely as an *other*. Events of this kind include all of the *creatively* productive events.[138]

Author and hero refer to two consciousnesses: the first the acting consciousness of the author and the second the imagined or perceived consciousness of the other, the character or hero the author is authoring.[139] Rather than coinciding precisely with the other, an author 'co-experiences' with the other, that is, moves between the position of the other (or event) and their own position, or on the boundary between self and other. Exotopy, then, is understood as a two-stage process. It first consists of the author co-experiencing from

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[135] Clark and Holquist, p. 87; Haynes, p. 72.
[136] Chapter 3.2 develops the notion of authorship in relation to design, but for now I am interested in exploring the mechanics of this aesthetic activity.
[137] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 22.
[138] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 86; see also M. M. Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Content, Material, and Form in Verbal Art', in *Art and answerability : early philosophical essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 282.
[139] Haynes, p. 72.

the viewpoint of an other and is followed by the author's necessary return to their unique position. Bakhtin writes:

> Aesthetic activity proper actually begins at the point when we *return* into ourselves, when we *return* to our own place outside the [other], and start to form and consummate the material we derived from projecting ourselves into the other.[140]

Early Bakhtin texts, especially *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, present this two-stage creative act as the precondition for characters (and the work of art) to be made whole. By experiencing the character externally, the author gives them closure and completeness, i.e. the author sees the character from their unique position but also shares in their created position, something that, as Todorov notes, resolves the 'deficit of seeing'.[141] Yet, as Todorov further states, later Bakhtin texts support the antithesis of his early position. The character, the other, is never made whole but remains 'unfinalised'; and this unfinalisability becomes the strength of the exotopic process in aesthetic activity.

> [Exotopy] does not confine the character in the consciousness of the author and puts into question the very notion of the privileging of one consciousness above another. [A character] is an unaccomplished, incomplete, heterogeneous being, but that is the reason of its superiority, because we are, all of us, as we have seen, subjects only in unaccomplishment.[142]

In other words, rather than completing the other (giving them a form or meaning that is final), exotopy suggests a form of authoring that leaves room for transformation and uncertainty. The imagined actions of this unfinalised other are affecting (as part of this back and forth dialogue) the process by which form-giving decisions are made. Similarly, this aesthetic activity, this back and forth movement at the boundary between inside and outside, between self and other, continuously happens during the design process and indeed during any creative activity. Whether we are imagining others acting in the future project or engaging with actual people the process is marked by exotopy and co-experience without which design would not be possible. Muf's formula 'from detail to strategy and

[140] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 26.
[141] The deficit of seeing is the inverse of the excess of seeing that we all possess in relation to others because of our unique place in space and time. The deficit is reduced through co-experiencing the excess from the other, their gift to us. Todorov, p. 99.
[142] Todorov, p. 103. The word unaccomplishment would imply that we are subjects insofar as we are unfinalised beings. We require information from others to momentarily construct a more accomplished version of ourselves.

back again'[143] can be reformulated, as it were, as the exotopic process 'from self to other and back again'.

The invention of community

What this section has developed—by concentrating primarily on the point of view of the designer—is that every person involved in the design process participates in the invention of publics.[144] They imagine others, whether users, publics or participants, and co-experience with them thereby giving form and meaning to the project. The designers, as we have seen, are projecting a certain architectural idea that is value-laden and, as Katherine Clarke puts it, 're-invents an identity' for the place.[145] At the same time, they are projecting publics conceived in the design process onto the same place: the tired person on a bench or the pensioner whose values are reflected in the durability of materials. Liza Fior says that muf's first hoarding project (Figure 13) gently brought the public into the process.[146] Town Square scenarios were imagined with local students, enacted *in situ*, photographed and printed out large scale to be posted on hoardings. The project, comments Katherine Clarke, revealed the community of Barking back to itself.[147] In fact, the expression 'revealing the community back to itself' implies the belief that the invented culture resulting from the interaction between designers and selected groups would reflect and affect the community of the Town Centre.

Figure 13. First hoarding project by muf, 2005. Photo: muf

[143] As stated on the first slide of muf's digital presentation for the 2004 Barking Town Square interview. The formula was derived by Katherine Shonfield in response to muf's work in Shonfield, 'Premature Gratification and Other Pleasures', in *This Is What We Do* (London : Ellipsis, 2001).
[144] While this phenomenon was evident in my own fieldwork, in the drawings of muf and AHMM, and explained through dialogism, the expression 'invention of publics' borrows from anthropologist Roy Wagner's expression 'the invention of culture'. Wagner describes how the work of the anthropologist, in fieldwork and in written accounts, is an 'invention of particular cultures.' This invention, he further states, 'is part of the more general phenomenon of human creativity—it transforms the mere assumption of culture into a creative art.' Wagner, pp. 10–11.
[145] INT20100526.
[146] INT20091026.
[147] INT20100331.

Both developers (UC and Redrow) were also engaged in similar inventions. UC's hoardings, in contrast to muf's, presented a series of large individual faces of unidentified people rendered in high contrast and saturated colours (Figure 14). The effect is of simultaneous diversity and sameness, a projected multiculturalism whose rendering is not without recalling the surface play of colour on AHMM's buildings and its argued social significance (see footnote 123).

Figure 14. Hoarding by Urban Catalyst, 2004. Photo: muf

In Redrow's promotional material and hoarding, the faces of imagined publics give way to digital renderings of the buildings and branding to the dominant colours of Barking Central with texts that speak of a 'brand new community' where one is invited to 'live, work, play, think …community' (Figure 15). These promotional elements from both developers make a certain statement about a perceived, imagined and desired public for the project. The same could be said of other aspects of the developers' intentions including housing typology and sizes, property prices and access to credit.

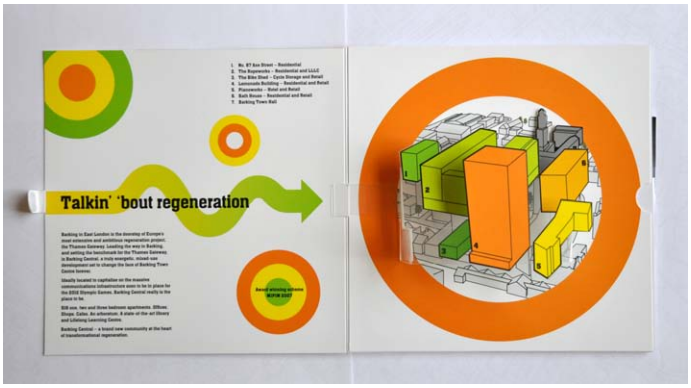

Figure 15. Marketing brochure by Redrow. Bottom left reads: 'Barking Central – a brand new community at the heart of transformational regeneration.'

Yet another example is the Council, also engaged in a process of inventing community. At no point did any Council member, appointed or elected, deny the gentrification agenda behind Barking Central. Housing officer Jennie Coombs mentions that the recent projects

were 'about creating a more sustainable community in terms of tenure mix, increasing economic activity in those areas and trying to erode the stuff we have about the levels of deprivation generally across the Town Centre.'[148] Unlike the majority of the Town Centre, the Council's invented community were financially better off and did not rely on social housing. Councillor Jeanne Alexander, who has lived in the Town Centre all her life, could not hide her frustration with the mechanisms of regeneration supported by her own Council:

> Years ago the Council had decided on trying to attract people of a certain salary, of a certain type, that would work in London and would stay here Monday to Friday. You devastate the town and for us who live here there would be nothing going on for the weekend because everybody would have gone home. And it was no longer about us, about the people of the Borough, it was about trying to attract people on certain salaries, doing certain jobs and I found that really offensive.[149]

In this quote, local resident Jeanne Alexander, herself an elected member of the Council, pointedly rejects the invention of community supported by the Council. She thus joins the majority of local residents who consider that the Town Square development was never meant for the existing population, but for others (usually outsiders and better off people), and so perform their own invention of culture with respect to the publics of the new development. 'Unless you are on benefits', local activist Sheila Delaney says, 'somebody else is going to pay, or you're filthy rolling in it by local terms, you ain't going to be living in central Barking.'[150]

When one imagines or works to know better another participant in the process, an architect with a community group for example, one is actually involved in an intricate process of identification and production. That is, like methodological considerations in social anthropology where the contingent aspects of fieldwork and its associated descriptive methods have to be taken into account[151], the particular relationships between those engaged in design processes and their related methods of engagement have to be adequately contextualised. Publics, users, architects or clients are not only fixed entities meeting in the context of a project, but fluid entities dialogically produced in the processes of design.

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[148] INT20100305.
[149] INT20100223.
[150] INT20100517.
[151] George Marcus identifies the critique brought to the fore in the 1980s with a series of texts influenced by interests in post-structuralism and the history of anthropology to underscore a 'profound discontent with the state of anthropology.' Marcus, 'On Ideologies of Reflexivity in Contemporary Efforts to Remake the Human Sciences', p. 385. These texts included (as cited by Marcus) *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986), *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1986), *The Predicament of Culture* (Clifford 1988), and *The Unspeakable* (Tyler 1987).

As this chapter has shown, every participant, whether individual person or group, has to be first understood according to the relations that link them to others. This idea translates the identification of participants from one based on functional or contractual roles to one based on inter-subjective relationships. Abstract and problematic entities like the user then gain better definition by direct engagement or by imagining their capability for response. Secondly, every participant in the process has to be understood as also participating in the invention of publics. That is, anybody who imagines the future project imagines who will use it, manage it, occupy it, like it, dislike it, etc. In design this includes imagining movement patterns, engaging directly with potential users and inventing complex personas to act in the future space. The principle that makes this activity possible is exotopy, or the temporary co-experience of other points of view and outsideness necessary to anybody engaged in aesthetic creative activity. But as noted previously, this conception of participant identity in the architectural project remains between abstraction and reality. Although we may co-experience with the other temporarily, this moment is always followed by a return to our own self from which value, form and meaning have to be re-evaluated. Hence the projection and invention of publics remains partly abstracted. As we may imagine, discrepancies between invented publics and real publics will inevitably emerge, the former being constantly confronted to the latter in everyday life. How to model this discrepancy and the co-existence of conflicting paradigms is the subject of the next chapter.

Plate 11

Entrance to Bath House residential building, 2010.

We found out that R. Whites Lemonades were on site and that's the colour code, that's why the building is yellow and green. That was another subtle reference. In the end the tower is called Lemonade Building because of that. It's a slightly subtle play on... With the Bath House, Morag [Myerscough] did this graphic that looks chavvy in a way, but it's meant to be like a Chanel product. So it's a play on the bath house. So there were games like that that we played with the layers of graphics and history.

Paul Monaghan, INT20100507.

Plate 12

Sushi restaurant before opening, May 2010.

Sebastian: If you want to make the place usable it's not only with buildings and a few bits of colour. You have to have an incentive. For example when I walk in the City and want to have a break... You want to grab a sandwich and sit somewhere.

TBK: And hopefully the restaurant does open. And that sushi place.

Nadine: [laughs] Yes... Will we ever see that! It's been there for a while.

S: If the Apprentice opens that will be key.

N: Apparently there will be wine–

S: Yes a wine shop just opposite.

N: Right underneath the Bath House.

TBK: Well hopefully you'll have more incentive to go grab your sandwich–

N: And eat it on the tree, with your bottle of wine!

INT20100419.

Plate 13

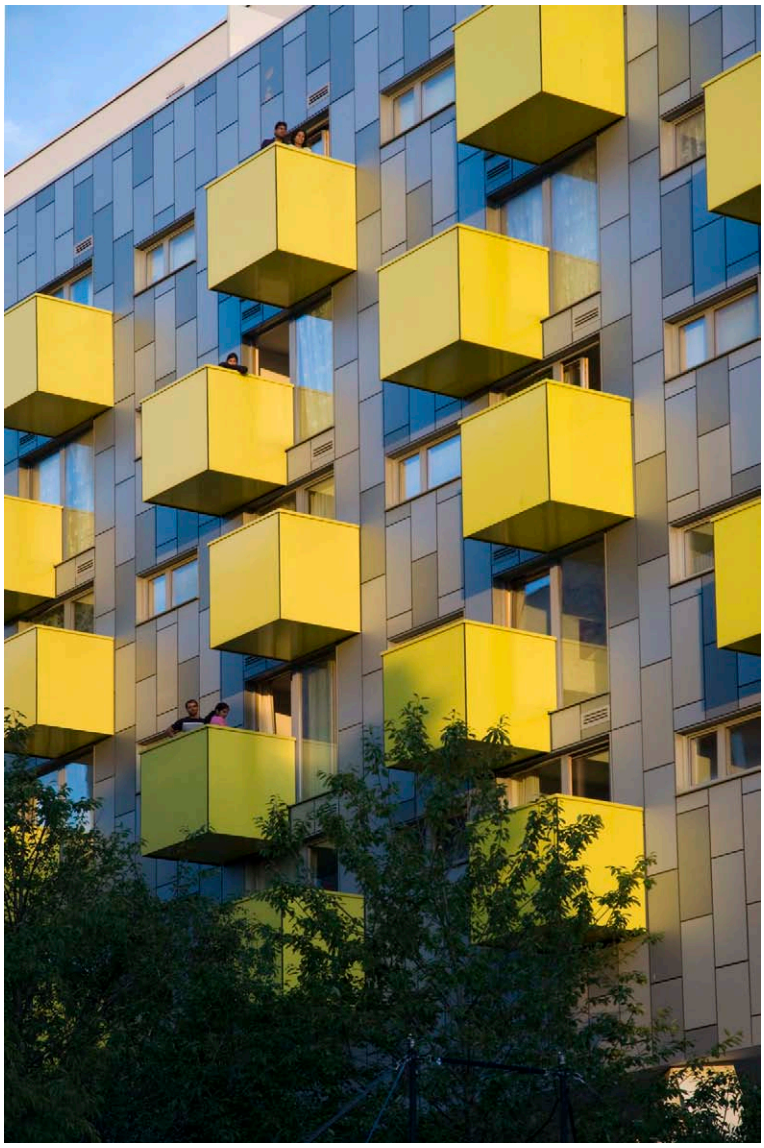
Redrow marketing office at the base of the Lemonade tower from Ripple Road, May 2010.

13:30. I walk into the Redrow sales office where I am greeted by Jean as a potential flat buyer. I play the part and soon she takes me and this other guy to the twelfth floor to see the model flats. The other guy is South Asian (I think) and is already living in Barking. He must be younger than me or the same age. She is excited to learn that I am a first-time buyer because Redrow offers financing for people like me. I cannot take photos inside, but I manage to have her let me take photos from the balconies 'of the view'. The flats are like Ikea brochures, no sign of life whatsoever. When we come back down, she gives literature to the other guy and motions for me to wait. He is quickly out the door and then with a look that says 'now we can get down to business' she asks me to take a seat. She takes me through the whole financing options, takes down my name and address, date of birth, how I heard about the sale, etc. None of this she had done for the other person.

FN20090926.

Plate 14

West façade of the Ropeworks during Molten Festival 2010.



You forget there are people up there.

Jeanne Alexander, INT20100223.

Plate 15

Second floor corridor at Ropeworks, April 2010.

Unlike their carpeted (and wider) neighbours above, the (narrower) second floor corridors of the Ropeworks residential building are covered with a durable asphalt-like material that could withstand the rolling of the complex's wheelie (garbage) bins. The bins are located at the building's opposite end from the elevators. The few welcome mats visible in this photo are one of the only allowed modifications to the external appearance of each flat.

Plate 16

Interior (inaccessible) courtyard of Ropeworks with accessible terrace in background, April 2010.

TBK: Do you know anybody who lives in the new flats?

Tehreem Talat: Yes. I have a mate who lives there, but she's Indian. Her husband is there, but she's gone back to India. Let me tell you personally she doesn't like the flats at all. [...]She was telling me she said to her husband 'why have you brought me to a hotel, I want to go to my house! My home, my flat.' And he goes 'this is your flat.'

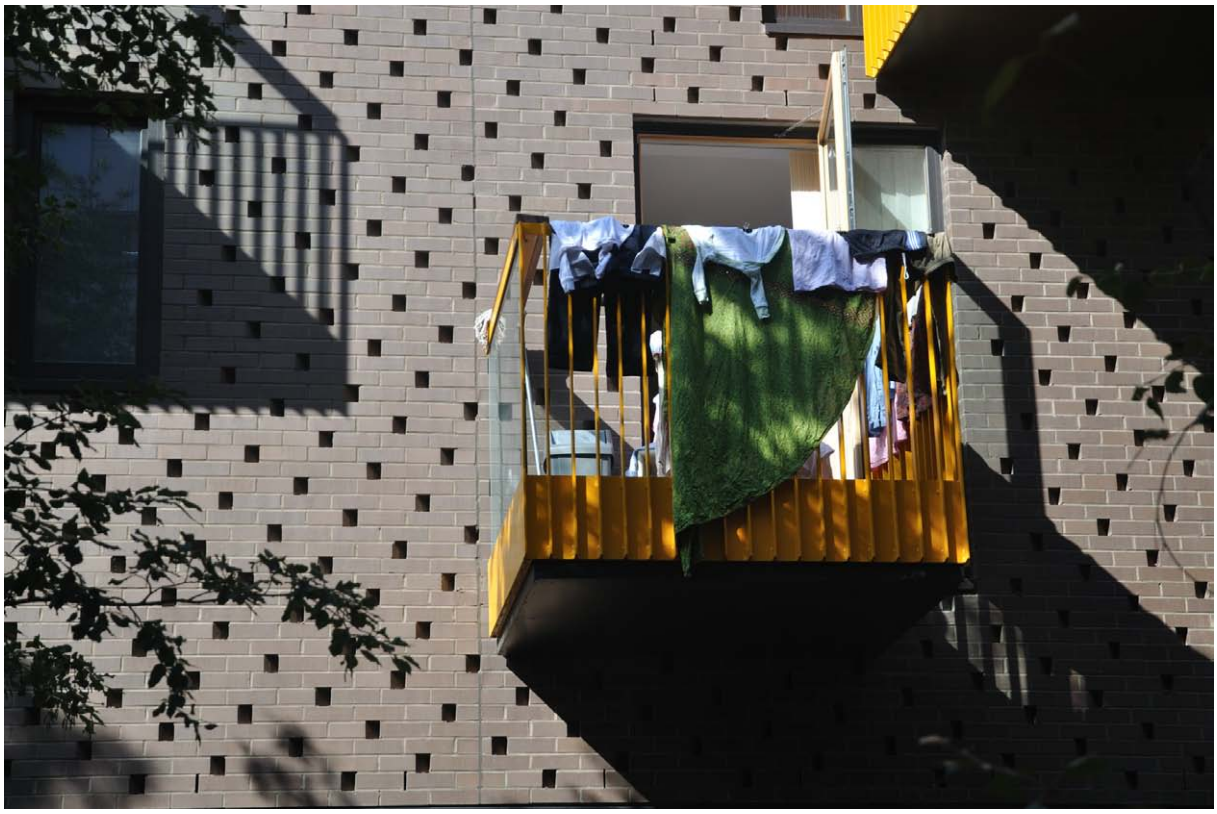
TBK: She thought he brought her to a hotel?

TT: First time she came here. He took her to the building, the green yellow building, and she said 'why have you brought me to a hotel, I want to go to my flat!' He said 'this is your flat!' Even I've never seen flats like this. This long corridor with lots of doors. I see hotels like this. Personally, if you ask me, I would never go live there because the flats are too small. Say if I'm studying and my husband wants to watch TV... They are so tiny! And the sitting area is open air to the kitchen so whatever you're cooking the whole house smells!

INT20100416B.

Plate 17

First traces of inhabition witnessed at Bath House, September 2009.



We were laughing during meetings thinking we would see people hanging their laundry outside, but now it's been empty for ages. That was a waste of money. The flats are probably expensive.

Jeanne Alexander, INT20100223.

1.3 DIALOGIC PUBLICS

NO COMMUNITY

> [The Town Square] is proving to be a place fit for purpose to provide that heart of a community where people can come. […] And I hope to see many more of those open spaces outside where people just come and enjoy themselves and spend their money and bring economic prosperity and sense of place for the community.
>
> Margaret Hodge[152]

> There is no such thing as 'the general public', just many publics.
>
> Rowan Moore, 'Notes on Public Space'[153]

At a few points in my fieldnotes I remark on the diversity of individuals and groups observed at Town Square (Plate 18). It seemed as though attempting to describe those on site as a single homogeneous community for the new space, or even a minimum of groups would be as complex as it would be futile. Conceiving of a single public for the Square would involve regrouping a multitude of different people and observed activities: families, groups of children playing, Council workers, people walking by with shopping bags and trolleys, Turkish and Eastern European groups of men and women drinking coffee and Coca-Cola at the BLC café, students working in the gallery, people in suits coming in and out of the Town Hall, construction workers having lunch on the Folly's steps, men smoking and drinking in the Secret Garden, teenagers on bicycles, police officers patrolling, South Asian families coming in and out of the new residential buildings, a Redrow representative sitting on the small chair in the arboretum smoking a cigarette, the familiarly odd-looking design student taking photos, the as-frequent but awkward marital dispute in the middle of the civic square, and so forth. Drawing any sort of boundary around these individuals and groups would, I felt, abstract them into a fictional unity.

This problematic abstraction of publics was not lost on Council officials with respect to the Town Square. In September 2010 I organised a workshop for the LBBD on the management and use of the Square. While discussing possible activities to attract people, participants expressed doubt about the Council's aim of universal inclusion.

> Lorraine Pulham: I think what we try to do sometime is we throw the net out so wide that instead of making it welcoming for everybody we–

[152] AUD20090930.
[153] 'Notes on Public Space', in *Open: New Designs for Public Space*, ed. by Raymond W. Gastil and Zoe Ryan (London: Hi Marketing, 2004), p. 116.

Fred Manson: Put everybody off!

LP: –put everybody off.[154]

Lorraine Pulham would later add that their efforts for inclusion paradoxically excluded most:

> I really do feel that we miss a trick because we try to do everything for everybody and in effect you alienate everybody because nobody knows what they're coming for. […] The community is not going to always want high brow educational things. They might just want their friend from down the pub belting out a few songs. Fantastic![155]

These feelings were confirmed during another workshop, this one with local teenagers. When asked about possible activities for the Town Square, participants expressed the desire to see more age-specific activities. As they saw it, the Square was 'for kids, not for teenagers.'[156] In both workshops, participants recognised the need to draw boundaries somewhere between publics. Reflecting on how the LBBD Arts and Cultural Development department (ACD) targeted specific groups of participants (see Chapter 11), Tracey McNulty comments:

> I don't want to sound like Margaret Thatcher, but there is no such thing as community in that sense. In a place like Barking and Dagenham you have a multitude of different attitudes, different backgrounds, different income, different education levels. I kind of think of them as the collective mass.[157]

In this case the attitude is again for drawing boundaries around certain groups, but does involve a paradox. On one side she acknowledges that it is impossible to conceive of a single community out of the plurality of different associations in the Borough. But on the other she understands 'them', the same plurality, as a 'collective mass'. Her comment points to a difference in the type of relation that unifies a group rather than to the impossibility of any unification. In other words, she expresses the paradox that a group or community can be simultaneously heterogeneous and homogeneous. These preoccupations about the ambivalence inherent to the identification of publics and individuals in the project, including of course the act of drawing boundaries and its implications, make up, in broad terms, the subject of this chapter. Having explored, in the preceding chapter, the identity and conception of participants in the project from the point of view of alterity and exotopy, we now turn to the relationship between these projections and the actual publics of the Town Square as I experienced them in fieldwork.

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[154] WRK20100921.
[155] WRK20100921.
[156] WRK20111206.
[157] Tracey McNulty, INT20091019.

SOCIAL HETEROGLOSSIA

Diversity and transience

My original expectations of a general public for the Town Square were tainted by what I then noticed was common amongst outsiders to the Borough: the tendency to map the demographics of much larger areas like Essex, East London, outer London, the LBBD or Dagenham onto the area of the Barking Town Centre where the Town Square is located. In this misconception, the Town Centre's population is imagined as homogeneous (mostly white working class) when it is in fact remarkably more diverse and transient demographically than the rest of the LBBD.[158] Colleagues and friends who visited the Town Centre expressed surprise at the 'banality' of Barking. Here is a typical comment by a colleague:

> I thought that Barking was quite unremarkable—not in a good or bad way, but just similar to other suburban-like areas I have been to around London in terms of demographic and built environment.

For someone whose visit limits itself to the Town Centre the 'borough' indeed appears different from an expected low-density suburban landscape and relatively homogeneous white British population. Two friends of a resident, for example, both from visible minorities, expressed fear at the idea of visiting Barking (the Town Centre) because it was 'way out in Essex'.

Partly due to a combination of a housing stock consisting primarily of Council homes and rented accommodations[159], as well as one of the highest Public Transport Access Level (PTAL) indexes of Greater London, the area of the Town Centre, as Sheila Delaney, Head of the Racial Equality Council (REC), explained, is where most people move in to the Borough. In April 2010, I spent four days at the REC during which Sheila attempted to put me in contact with as many community representatives as she could. The diversity of those working at the REC and of their clients was indeed striking, representing most established as well as newer immigrant communities—the majority of which lived in Abbey and Gascoigne wards. According to Sheila, the immigration pattern has been consistent since the 1960s:

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[158] The Barking Town Centre and primarily Abbey and Gascoigne wards have the most diverse community of the entire Borough. In 2001, for comparison, the percentage of white British population in Abbey Ward was 46%, compared to 81% for the rest of the Borough. Source: National Statistics (2001 census and projected data). This phenomenon is what the LSE has called the 'uneven geography' of the Borough. Its 'Outer City' document is a hundred page report on Barking and Dagenham produced by master's students in the Cities Programme. The Cities Programme (LSE), 'Outer City' (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2008).

[159] The Town Centre has the highest percentage of privately rented accommodation of the entire Borough. Source: 2001 census and The Cities Programme (LSE), p. 24.

> Many Asians, Africans and Caribbeans moved here because almost two thirds of the housing in the Borough was Council housing. [...] The only places that they could find that were available for them were in Abbey. Not even Gascoigne so much. Because in Abbey that's where the most affordable homes were. That's what set the pattern that has persisted and that is still where a lot of the families start off and a lot are happy to stay.[160]

In addition to immigration from other countries, the LBBD has seen a recent influx of migrants from within London and the UK. Those I met unanimously chose the Borough based on cheaper housing[161] and excellent transit connections to Central London. One recent London migrant I interviewed had a car and dreamed of owning a cottage and so bought in Becontree. Another was a recent immigrant from Somalia who moved to Dagenham from South London feeling the area would be much safer to raise his children. Another with no car bought in the Town Centre because of its easy access to the City and Central London. Others bought in the Town Centre because their financial adviser told them it was the only area of Greater London they could afford. A UCL colleague rented a one-bedroom flat in one of the new residential buildings of Barking Central because it was the only place he could afford to rent a new fully furnished flat in London with easy access to Bloomsbury.

While Sheila comments that a lot of families are happy to stay in the Town Centre after moving there, she admits that most people are still 'town-sufferers' that see living in the Town Centre as a temporary phase. She herself lives on the Gascoigne Estate but dreams of owning a house with its own garden in Dagenham. The pattern, it appears, has been that the more affluent residents of the Borough eventually leave the Town Centre for the suburbs to the east. Elderly residents told me that at the end of the 1900s, affluent residents left for New Barking, leaving behind the factories and slum dwellings of Old Barking which was, in the words of local historian Mark Watson, 'always a bit dodgy.'[162] In recent years they leave (or just arrive from outside) for areas like Becontree and for the suburban ideal of a house and a garden. This socio-economic divide persists to this day.[163] Most Council workers I met in the Town Centre indeed lived farther afield in single family homes either in New Barking or Dagenham. In 2010, only one LBBD councillor out of fifty-one lived in the Town Centre. The recent developments in and around the Town

[160] Sheila Delaney, INT20100517.
[161] Between 2009 and 2011, the LBBD constantly featured in the National and London media as having some of the most affordable property prices of Greater London.
[162] Mark Watson spoke to the Barking and District Historical Society on 2 November 2009. He was comparing demographic transformation in Barking in the 1930s to the changes now taking place in the Town Centre. New Barking or 'Barking New Town' are the residential areas north east of Barking Station built at the turn of the twentieth century. Old Barking roughly corresponds to the historic area of the Town Centre between the station and the Town Quay. See Appendix U and W.
[163] Abbey and Gascoigne were the most deprived wards in the LBBD between 2000 and 2010.

Centre might not necessarily stop the trend. Barking Central is only part of a broader scheme by the Borough and private developers to build 6,000 new homes before 2023 within the area of the Town Centre or immediately adjacent to it.[164] Given all these built and projected developments, population growth estimates vary widely, predicting anywhere between a 30% to a 150% increase before 2026 in Abbey and Gascoigne wards.[165] Also given the trend for buy-to-let developments over resident-owner schemes (especially since the 2008 financial crisis) the incoming population of the new residential projects should reinforce the transience of the Town Centre and the division between Old Barking and New Barking. My own observations of the population of Barking Central, as will be seen below, did not reveal the property owning class that may have been imagined by gentrification efforts but a more transient letting group.

Given diversity and transience in the Town Centre, the tendency to draw a boundary around a general public for the Town Square, or indeed a multitude of publics, smooths out any internal conflict or contradiction that may exist within by treating the whole as homogeneous, capable of agency and unchanging over time. This happened constantly in interviews where people referred to fixed groups of people (sometimes in reference to groups in which my interlocutors placed themselves) as though they were capable of autonomous and unanimous rational action: the architects, the Council, the developer, the elderly, foreigners, the people from Gascoigne, etc. The next four sections develop particular instances of this from fieldwork.

The Council

One of the most frequent reference to a homogeneous public in relation to the Town Square was to the Council. In all cases, the name Council was brought up to express the agency (actions and responses) of a single entity regardless of whether the action or response was the responsibility of a single person, a department or a group of departments.

> Peter Green: The scheme wasn't viable. So we went back to the Council and said 'this doesn't work. We need your help. What do you actually want us to build?'[166]

[164] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Planning for the Future of Barking Town Centre: Barking Town Centre Area Action Plan Pre-submission Report', 2009. During my research, Seawall Court (Plate 28) and Barking Central had already been built along with housing near the Town Quay and Axe Street. The 2009 Area Action Plan also called for development at Fresh Wharf on the opposite side of the Roding from the Town Quay (Plate 28), at King William Street, primarily a business campus, along North Street and London Road, at Barking Station, as well as continuing redevelopment on the Gascoigne Estate (Map 3).
[165] Figures adapted from The Cities Programme (LSE), p. 28.
[166] INT20100720.

> Fred Manson: The Council was getting frustrated by this because they wanted it to happen and it wasn't. Then they got a much better design and it started to make sense.[167]
>
> Dave Mansfield: Clearly the Council had invested quite a lot in this scheme and it would've been a catastrophe if it didn't get completed.[168]
>
> Paul Monaghan: In a way the Council encouraged us [with the naming of buildings] and they liked the slight reflection to history.[169]
>
> Shane Moss: The Council approached the main contractor, Ardmore, who was the contract for the Town Square, because they wanted to find a bricklaying company to take on the project of the Folly Wall.[170]
>
> Mark Brearley: Most of all congratulations to the Council and all for never forgetting that good design really matters.[171]
>
> Ron Petchey: The Council compulsory purchased the land and put those flats up.[172]
>
> Tehreem Talat: When they were doing the changes my mum in law said that it was useless because she's been living here for quite a while and she was telling me 'I don't know what the Council is up to'.[173]
>
> Joyce Petchey: I tell you another mistake that the Council did make and everybody remembers it: the Gascoigne Estate.[174]

From these excerpts we might imagine the Council as a rational individual capable of agency. And it is interesting to note that the entity Council is referred to by people who are outside of its boundaries as well as people who are (and consider themselves) inside its boundaries. The actions and responses in these statements are of course the responsibility of many people with different associations within the Council. The Council might well refer to Peter Watson, the Mayor, the entire Planning or Regeneration departments, the Assembly or a combination of any with their subjectivity denied by reference to an abstract homogeneous entity. But it is not true that this is done—in these cases—with the intent of negatively abstracting people to homogeneous categories. In many of the same interviews the heterogeneity of the Council is acknowledged simultaneously (the same was true in Tracey McNulty's comment above about the 'collective mass'). Discussing consultation, Jennie Coombs here refers once to the Council as a consensus just before alluding to possible internal conflicts:

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[167] INT20091009.
[168] INT20100511.
[169] INT20100507.
[170] INT20090928.
[171] AUD20090930.
[172] INT20091105.
[173] INT20100416B.
[174] INT20091105.

> By sitting and working together we sort of had an agreed line from the Council before we were seeing those people and they found that a much clearer way to work. They weren't working against competing aspirations within the Council.[175]

Internal conflicts within the Council are indeed many. To start, in the above excerpts there is no distinction between elected members of the Assembly and appointed Council employees. Furthermore, a homogeneous Council erases the tension in the elected Assembly between Barking and Dagenham (see Chapter 8), the mechanics of party politics, the various associations represented by elected members, or their respective demographics. The same is true if we look at the appointed Council workers and various departments. Because the Town Square project came out of both the Regeneration and ACD departments efforts were made early on to set up inter-departmental collaboration that ran into internal conflicts (see Tracey McNulty's description of embedding artists into the planning process in Chapter 10). Or one of the most absurd moments of my fieldwork when I followed library staff to the East Street market for World Book Day 2010 (Plate 20). Interviews with Council officials had revealed an interest and belief in creating connections between the Town Square and the existing market but these were hindered that day when the market manager (an LBBD employee) shut down the library's read-aloud session for operating an amplifier and distributing pamphlets in the market without permission. It appeared that Zoinul Abidin, director of the library, had not been able to reach the proper authorities in time for the event and so the Council shut down the Council's efforts. A friend would later summarise the event as 'a dog chasing its own tail.'[176]

The Barking Learning Centre

The BLC is a prime example of the heterogeneity of imagined publics in the vicinity of the Town Square. From its inception the BLC was to be a regrouping of different institutions or tenants. 'Technically', says former director Nazeem Ullah, 'there are three partners: the Council, and the two external partners the University of East London and the Barking and Dagenham College.'[177] Here again, 'the Council' refers to four different organisations: the library, the One-Stop-Shop, the Gallery and the LBBD Adult College. Furthermore, additional space on the ground floor was allocated for a small café (externally managed). Not only is the BLC made up of different groups with varied interests, but some of these interests sometimes clash with consequences for the whole. The librarians I spoke to complained that communication within the BLC was difficult and that their only

[175] INT20100305B.
[176] For a longer description of the event including excerpts from my fieldnotes see Appendix E.
[177] INT20100225A.

interaction with the other groups would be in the tea room. You could sense there was a clear discomfort for the library staff who felt they were 'just renting space' in the building and had no real connection to BLC management. 'What the Council calls "partnership working"', comments librarian Denise Lovelace, 'is not partnership working. It's just people in the same building.'[178]

The library is the 'partner' that appears to have captured most of muf's attention during the design process, linking its publics to the arboretum and Square. This overlooks the fact that the One-Stop-Shop, located on the ground floor, might pull as many people to the site as the library would. Muf's daily occupation drawing of 2006 (see Figure 12 in Chapter 3) includes numbers of projected users for the library, lecture facilities and café, but not for library staff or the One-Stop-Shop. The civic relationship of paying your taxes or rent at the Town Square was not exploited, as far as I know, as a potential value of the new space or the building. The BLC, as a singular public for the future Square was, in fact, often reduced to the singular public of the library.[179] Librarian Jean Brown sums up the issue:

> What does BLC mean to the outside public? When we did that seminar a while ago, one of the projects we had to do was to go out and ask the public where the BLC was. One of the comments was 'why don't you go ask that lady at the library, she'll know!' That about sums it up doesn't it?[180]

Homes for others…

I am standing outside St Margaret's Church with Ned who is smoking a cigarette. Peter Midlane just finished giving me a tour of the place. Ned, sixty-seven, is a veteran of the British Legion. Every year he and his 'missus' Sharon collect funds for veterans. He now volunteers part time at the Church's café. He has lived in Barking all his life—'born and bred', he tells me. He introduces me to Sharon with a smile saying she is a 'foreigner from Kent.' After telling me Barking is changing for the worse, he describes the new flats at Barking Central as terrible. 'All open plan.' Who would want to cook in their living room,

[178] INT20100218.
[179] The reluctance to use the name Learning Centre may also in some cases be a symptom of the expression's unintelligibility or perceived condescension as in this quote by Fred Manson (INT20091009): 'I don't know about a Learning Centre. I don't know if I'm allowed in. I don't know if I'm going to behave in a correct way, and so on. With a library everybody knows they're allowed in there. A library has a remarkable level of behaviour that is associated with it. […] I always challenge people who say it's a learning centre: what do you want to communicate with that? What have you lost by using that name? What would you think if you had to go to a learning centre? How boring!'
[180] INT20100218.

he wonders. I ask him who he thinks will buy the new flats. 'Well our colonial friends will buy them. Foreigners buy them.'[181]

In Barking, housing issues and demographics are constantly intertwined. They are, as one local resident once mentioned, 'code for each other'.[182] The undercurrent of resentment toward housing policy could be felt in many of my conversations with local residents, especially as questions about the Town Square (the public space) were largely met with responses about the AHMM buildings and the Council's housing policies. My interview with local activist Keith Scotcher, for example, lasted for about an hour and a half during which he relentlessly criticised the Borough's housing and regeneration policy as I unsuccessfully tried to redirect the conversation toward the Town Square and public space.[183]

Figure 16. Two stills from Marc Isaacs' documentary *All White in Barking* with the demolition of terrace houses on Ripple Road (including the Labour Political Club) at left.

Possible resentment directed at housing and immigration was also the implicit thesis of Marc Isaacs' 2007 documentary *All White in Barking* (first aired on the BBC's 'White Season') whose montages that cut between scenes of demolition in the Town Centre, elderly white people looking concerned and the ethnically diverse street market made clear the intended link between regeneration, immigration and the existing white population (Figure 16). In this next passage, I discuss the link between housing and demographics with Councillor Jeanne Alexander, who lives in the Town Centre:

> Jeanne Alexander: A lot of my generation and the older people are moving away now, not because it's not white but because they don't feel it's their Borough anymore.
>
> TBK: Most older people I spoke to feel that what has happened is not for them. They cannot identify with the town they once knew. A lot of the time this feeling is wrapped up with resentment for newcomers.

[181] INT20091002B.
[182] I was repeatedly told by white British residents that Barking people were not racist, but that housing issues had been exploited by the BNP to stir resentment against visible minorities.
[183] I had met Keith a year before during a visit to the Sikh Gurdwara part of the induction for possible heritage guides at the Molten Festival 2009. He was introduced to me as the local activist for housing issues. At no point in our conversation did he ever link housing issues and gentrification with ethnic issues. His argument remained based on economics: existing poorer local residents versus more well-off newcomers.

> JA: And it wasn't done for the immigrant population either. It was done for young people of a certain... They are right it was never done for them.[184]

In my comment above I refer to 'most older people' because those I met, like Ned or the Nichollses, had very strong opinions about the changes in the Borough but also because this was the impression given by other informants that the elderly, as a homogeneous group, were wholly opposed to regeneration and the demographic changes occurring.[185] Like other publics, however, they did not live up to a smooth homogenisation and individual attitudes toward regeneration and immigration varied widely. I was told by employees at the REC, for example, that elderly residents from established immigrant communities were equally critical of the changes taking place in the Town Centre. The two meetings of the Barking and District Historical Society I attended reinforced a sort of middle ground (Plate 25). All participants were white people over fifty (most were over seventy) and most had lived all their lives in the Borough.[186] At the mention of changes in the Town Centre there was indeed some very uneasy shifting in chairs and expressive sighs. When I met some members in private, however, the group appeared much more fragmented. Some, like the Nichollses, took a more nuanced position vis-à-vis regeneration agreeing that some change needed to happen even though they still disagreed with its architectural style. Others took drastic positions launching bitter attacks against the Council and recent immigrants. Here Rita, whom I met just after speaking with Ned, speaks up (see also Plate 26):

> We have far more people here than we used to, thousands of them. And they just accommodate them and we're not being looked after at all. It's appalling. […] It's not the nice place it used to be. I don't know why you'd want to live here by choice. But you've lived here all these years, so you just close the front door and that's your home.[187]

Joyce Petchey, when she had me over for tea at her home on Upney Lane, confessed she loved the new buildings. 'Even the colours!' But added she would not necessarily confess the same to her friends.

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[184] INT20100223.

[185] See Appendix F.

[186] The two meetings were lectures. The first was by local resident Joyce Petchey entitled 'Upney Lane 1930 to 2010' and the second by local historian Mark Watson entitled 'Barking in the 1930s'. I was by far the youngest and felt somewhat out of place. The president's introduction included updates and news on the failing health of absent members.

[187] INT20091002C.

The publics of Barking Central did not, however, live up to projections, regardless of how these were formulated: the immigrant population, foreigners, young people from a particular income bracket, etc. Gentrification, as we saw in the previous chapter, was never denied by any Council representative I met. Even what seemed like unsupported claims by Keith Scotcher of selective demolition and removal of poorer tenants in the Town Centre were confirmed by Peter Watson who confessed that when he started working with LBBD Regeneration he soon realised that they had hired him to 'demolish Barking and rebuild it.'[188] Sheila Delaney says the issue affects all existing local residents. During our interview she paused to greet a woman from Kosovo. After the woman had left, Sheila continued:

> The lady you just met now was with me a few years ago when they were redoing some of the flats on the Gascoigne and they were anxious to be owner-occupiers rather than tenants because they were now settled here. So we went along and almost had to garrotte the sales people, and say 'how much does a three bedroom flat costs… watch my lips.' Fifth time again 'but how much?' So eventually she quoted something and of course she came up with double what that family could possibly hope to pay even with the husband doing non-stop overtime. How affordable is affordable? The older British communities have asked that, the newer communities too.[189]

During a month in the spring of 2010 I rented a flat in the Ropeworks building of Barking Central above the BLC. In addition to giving me continuous access to my case study site, my residency at Ropeworks was the opportunity to observe the new residents, those imagined by architects, developers, the Council and the existing local population. Out of the 246 flats in Ropeworks, only five were owned by individuals while the rest had been bought en-masse by renting agencies. Meeting residents, it turned out, was more difficult than imagined. The high turn-over linked to the buy-to-let industry meant that most of the residents were only passing through and engaging little with the place and their neighbours. Indeed, every weekend during the time I lived there, families (all South Asian) would be moving in and out of the building. The residents of the building were for the most part between 25 and 40 years old. Very few were over 40 and I did not see anyone who could

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[188] INT20100419. Here he explains how he would be brought in to make things happen (demolish and build) with the 'minimum amount of fuss':

> TBK: That sounds like organised and selective–
> Peter Watson: It's called fixing. […] We tend to get a lot of crap work because they won't give it to other people because they won't do it.
> TBK: So I suppose this was for what was here before, things on the Gascoigne Estate, selective demolition of some buildings and push the project forward.
> PW: That's right. We'd been asked to look at demolishing some of the flats out there today. It's a much bigger picture. Before [the Town Square] happened there were all these other things and that's where a lot of our work is as well, creating that space, making it happen.

[189] INT20100517B.

be considered elderly. They were primarily single people, couples, and couples with small children. Most were South Asian, then Afro-Caribbean and Eastern European, then East Asian. I did not meet a single white British person. The only version of a residents' association was an association of two directors, both resident-owners, who were essentially volunteer supervisors for Labyrinth, the management company. One of the directors, Sebastian, and his partner Nadine, complained about the lack of community in the building, the absence of a residents' association, and the sorry state of the building only two years after its opening. After two years of living there they had met almost no one.

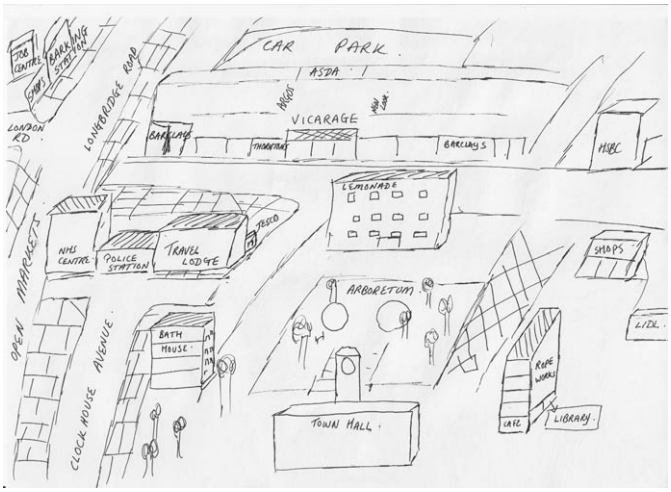

Figure 17. Town Centre map drawn by Mary, owner-resident at Bath House.

Apart from them, I only met one other couple who had bought their Barking Central flat, this one at Bath House.[190] All of them had moved to Barking from somewhere else in London (Brixton and the Docklands). They did not know Barking and chose it because it was the only place they could afford to buy in London. Yet they, out of the many residents I have spoken to from existing and new communities, seemed to have a particular attachment to the place they had recently moved to. Or at least they were seeking one, engaging in local politics and desperately wanting some form of Town Centre residents' association. Sebastian had taken it upon himself to monitor the worsening state of the building. He thought of doing the same with the Town Square and local politicians (the state of the chandeliers was a point of contention) while expecting with some excitement the arrival of a sushi restaurant (opened then closed) and a wine shop at Bath House (never opened). I met Mary (South Asian background) from Bath House while she was engaged in conversation with Elvis and Grant the security guards at Ropeworks. She told me she had been so desperate to meet people (she worked from home while her husband worked in the City) and Elvis and Grant had been the only ones she managed to have some sort of

[190] A Barking Central security guard told me the other director at Ropeworks still owned her flat but had moved out and was now renting it out.

friendship with after a year of living at Barking Central. Most of her neighbours, she thought, wanted to be left alone. Reaching out like this sounded reasonable when she described her building as a prison and a hotel with matchbox flats barely sufficient for a couple. For a while I asked my informants to draw maps of the Town Centre and Mary's (Figure 17) was by far the most detailed of all, including long term residents, showing great affinity with the place she was desperate to call home.

The heteroglot public sphere

My experience of the publics of Barking Central resembled the one I had with respect to the Council or the BLC: the rational construction of these publics did not exactly match what I experienced in the field. There were always factors (in the everyday) that worked to destabilise their fictional unity. Yet this ambivalence of publics is precisely what can be explained through dialogism and Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia. In his theory of discourse, Bakhtin conceives of language as a social phenomenon much more encompassing than a simple grammatical system. He writes:

> At any moment of its evolution, language is stratified [...] into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, 'professional' and 'generic' languages of generations and so forth.[191]

This stratification of language into socio-ideological strata is what Bakhtin calls heteroglossia. He suggests that heteroglossia is what destabilises the unity of language, a unity that is always posited rather than given.[192] In other words, heteroglossia is the messy reality of everyday speech: utterances made in particular social contexts, at a particular time and a particular place, whose meanings are entirely dialogical (worked at through discussion with others because the meaning of any utterance depends on the one that preceded it and a response). Emphasising the importance of the everyday, Bakhtin points out that very little of what we do or say in our daily lives is consciously predicated on the rules of unitary language, that 'it is not, after all, from the dictionary that the speaker gets his words!'[193]

> For any individual consciousness living in it, language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world. All words have the 'taste' of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and

[191] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press Slavic Series No. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), pp. 271–272.
[192] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 270.
[193] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 294.

> contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions.[194]

Bakhtin identifies two competing forces acting on language. The first is a 'unifying, centralising and centripetal force, the national language system, a system of linguistic norms and standards.'[195] This centripetal force is the one that insures a maximum of mutual understanding. Opposed to this is the centrifugal force of everyday speech, the evolution of particular context-based languages that further stratify the idealised unitary language and increase heteroglossia. It is crucial to note that for Bakhtin both these forces act simultaneously. Unitary language is present in everyday speech, at the same time as the latter affects the former.

> Every utterance participates in the 'unitary language' (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces).[196]

Unity, in this case, is conceived as something much more fluid than a homogeneous whole. What Bakhtin's conception of language suggests is that an entity being given meaning is always ambivalently moving between two poles: homogeneity and heterogeneity. Strict boundaries conceived to smooth out differences will always be contested by heteroglossia.

In recent years social theorists have drawn on Bakhtin's theory of language, social heteroglossia, and centripetal and centrifugal forces, arguing that these concepts adequately describe publics in their context, based on embodied subjects, everyday life and fluid boundaries. This dialogical conception of publics has been used primarily to revisit the Habermasian discursive model of the public realm expanding it to address some of its lacunae and blind spots.[197] The principal point of expansion is to question the idea that discourse and dialogue create a space for rational deliberation beyond everyday life, subjectivity and the dichotomy between public and private realms.[198] The Bakhtinian critique thus adds to those who have raised questions about equality and the flattening of subjective distinctions necessary for ideal dialogue to take place (or for unity to be possible). Indeed, some major criticisms of the Habermas model are that it overlooks crucial

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[194] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 293.
[195] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 270.
[196] Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', p. 272.
[197] In 1992 Craig Calhoun's collection of articles revisiting the Habermasian notion of the public sphere included only two short references to Bakhtin—one Habermas' own, the other by Benjamin Lee. Craig J. Calhoun, ed., *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), pp. 413-416 and p. 427. Over a decade later, the emphasis has shifted and the 2004 collection *After Habermas* includes significant articles by three prominent Bakhtin scholars: Michael Gardiner, Ken Hirschkop and John Michael Roberts. Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts, eds, *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)
[198] Seyla Benhabib identifies the aim to transcend the distinction between public and private realms in all models that try to describe and explain the modern public realm. See 'Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig J. Calhoun, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992).

subjective aspects of participants, that it is predicated on the belief that individuals can abandon all distinctions for the sake of public unity and that the model denies the existence of embodied subjects.[199] Consequently, it does not (and cannot) properly account for patterns of inclusion and exclusion.[200]

At no point in my fieldwork, for example, could I completely reconcile the ideal public of the design team for the Town Square (muf, AHMM, LBBD, developers and contractors) with my experience of individual members of the group. That is, the description of the project along contractual or professional lines could not encompass some of the more inter-personal interaction that appears to have marked its process. 'We're like blood relatives with the Council', Liza Fior once admitted. In the following four quotes from different interviews, I have removed all references to names given the sensitive nature of some of the comments:

> I think he almost fell in love with her. To him and to his taste she is totally on message. She's artistic, clever and edgy and highly theoretical. I think it was a good match.
>
> You know what she is like! She's quite fiery when she wants to be.
>
> Some days I think it's bloody ridiculous, you know, the energy put into it and the energy of massaging his ego in order to be given territory.
>
> So he says about her: 'Oh, she's come on such a lot. She knew nothing when she started.' There is a lot of paternalism in it all.

The chief idea behind the Bakhtinian critique of the public realm is that the firm boundaries of ideal conceptions negate the messiness and heteroglossia of these subjective comments and relations. Boundaries, for Bakhtin, like those delineating different publics, are rather conceived as naturally fluid. Michael Gardiner writes:

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[199] The feminist critique is particularly relevant on this point. See for example Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: a Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig J. Calhoun, Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); J. Alway, 'No Body There : Habermas and Feminism', *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*, 19 (2000), 117 –144.

[200] In 'Models of Public Space', Seyla Benhabib points out that one of the chief virtues of the Habermasian public sphere model, and perhaps the reason why it is criticised and expanded upon rather than refuted, is that it is (paradoxically) open and indeterminate. The model does not at the start restrict access or set an agenda for debate (two points that are heavily criticised by Nancy Fraser in 'Rethinking the Public Sphere') and allows re-negotiation of the terms of engagement (pp. 84-85). She concludes that the 'discursive model is the only one that is compatible both with the general social trends of our societies and with the emancipatory aspirations of new social movements (p. 95).' Fraser's critique of the above two points needs to be nuanced. Because Habermas gives a general and open definition to what may constitute a public sphere this one does not, in practice, give restrictions on access (apart from engaging 'as though' equals) or content (just common concerns). Fraser criticises the first by showing that access is indeed restricted (see also introduction in Crossley and Roberts) because it is assumed that inequalities can be effectively bracketed for the duration of public dialogue. For the second she points out that the Habermas model assumes that 'common good' is a given to public dialogue while it is often otherwise. 'What will count as a matter of common concern will be decided precisely through discursive contestation (p. 129).' What Habermas overlooks in this case is the transformative potential of dialogue.

> While Habermas seeks to delineate sharply between particular realms of social activity and forms of discourse—between, for instance, public and private, state and public sphere, reason and non-reason, ethics and aesthetics—Bakhtin problematizes such demarcations, sees them as fluid, permeable and always contested, and alerts us to the power relations that are involved in any such exercise of boundary-maintenance.[201]

Drawing a strict boundary around one particular public (even one with which I identify), for instance, is problematic because it does not acknowledge how one person might be both of this one and of another simultaneously. Moreover, it also negates whatever subjective traits a person may have or actions they may do that are in conflict with those required by the 'boundary maintenance'. For a public to relate in any way adequately to its participants, it has to be situated and contextual and allow for contradictions to coexist. An ontology of publics based on rational speech and equality demands, following Gardiner's argument, a sort of de-humanisation. A person must shed everything subjective, everything that makes them a unique individual in space and time, in order to converse and debate with others who have similarly been stripped of all that makes them humans.[202]

The rational delineation of user groups, as seen in Chapter 3, similarly demands that real persons shed everything that might contradict the rules of the group or their functional roles. Identifying teenagers as only one part of 'the whole family', as seen in the above comments by Lorraine Pulham and the teenagers' own responses, leads to their alienation. But delineating teenagers, or 'the youth', as a single independent user group also demands that each person of a certain age drop everything that might contradict certain expectations projected on the category. My first interview with a teenager confirmed certain attitudes that may have been expected; all my questions about public space and its possible uses were answered by references to shopping and particular shops.[203] Yet during my second meeting, this one with ten teenagers, their attitudes varied widely from my expectations. They expressed, in the two hours of the workshop, opinions hovering between youthful enthusiasm (inventing games and events for the Town Square) and rational problem solving. At one point they went as far as solving maintenance issues by adopting a strong line and suggesting young offenders pick up rubbish in public spaces—

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[201] Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', p. 30.

[202] In other words, there is no embodied subject in Habermas' model as opposed to Bakhtin's. That is the case, it seems, even when the former acknowledges the importance of 'plebeian culture' for the nineteenth-century public sphere (see Habermas, 'Further Reflections on the Public Sphere', in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Craig J. Calhoun, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), p. 427) or the significance of the civil rights movements of the twentieth century in pressuring the official public sphere 'from without' (see Ken Hirschkop, 'Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas', in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. by Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004)).

[203] This was the only person who showed up to my initial workshop, the organisers having double-booked the Youth Forum group.

an opinion that, especially following the London riots of 2011[204], challenges any conception of 'the youth' as a homogeneous group.

Because it supports an embodied public realm, one that puts primary emphasis on the relationship between individual voices and their ideal unification, it is not surprising to find out the emphasis on everyday actions in the Bakhtinian critique of the public realm.[205] Michael Gardiner writes:

> The everyday, the event of speech and dialogue within its immediate context, the individual tone given (irony, humour, sarcasm, etc.) are […] precisely what Bakhtin's theories argue for.[206]

And as Ken Hirschkop implies, the forces that act on making boundaries fluid (between official language and everyday speech, between one public and another) are always at work, even in the unstructured irrational speech of daily life.[207] As seen above, Bakhtin suggests that the everyday is ambivalent and a site of contestation—centripetal and centrifugal forces act simultaneously in everyday actions. In this sense, Bakhtin sees in the everyday the locus of both authority (its effects on habits, customs, etc.) and its subversion, something that will be made apparent in Part III when discussing the concept of the *carnivalesque*.

Wholes and parts

Every naming of a public, because it implies the drawing of a boundary (most of the time against the messy reality of everyday life), is an action that implies authority and boundary maintenance. This was the case at Barking Central where the population did not fall squarely into the projected gentrifying, property-owning class. Soon after Ropeworks and Bath House were occupied, one of the design professionals who worked on the buildings called me and commented that the residents had completely thrown the heating and ventilation systems off. The issue, it seemed, was that the developers had not expected whole families moving into the small flats[208], overcrowding the buildings and overloading its systems. Meanwhile, Labyrinth (the management company) and its representatives on site (the resident directors) were trying to enforce rules for the buildings to counter the *laissez-faire* and disruptive attitude of tenants temporarily living in Barking who may not feel

[204] In Barking the riots occurred mainly in the Town Centre along Ripple Road. The workshop with the Youth Forum took place in December 2011.
[205] The link between corporeality on the one hand and the everyday on the other is a common thread between the dialogical thinkers (Bakhtin, Buber and Levinas) presented by Michael Gardiner in 'Alterity and Ethics: A Dialogical Perspective', p. 122.
[206] Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', p. 39.
[207] Hirschkop, 'Justice and Drama', p.61.
[208] Barking Central was planned with only 18 three-bedroom flats over a total of 518. The Council, according to Jeanne Alexander, had to push the developer for these. They are all located in the Axe Street building, the only one with affordable housing.

a strong attachment to the place. Because of this ambivalence between projected unity and everyday reality it becomes paramount, as described by social heteroglossia, to correctly frame the particular position (ideological to a certain extent) expressed by any projection or identification of publics. Publics are ideological constructions (they have socially and discursively constructed meaning) that are ambivalently situated between homogeneous entities and heterogeneous assemblages. In all examples presented, it sometimes makes sense to treat groups as wholes while sometimes it makes more sense to treat them as individual parts, but these two conceptions simultaneously co-exist. The public constituted of Ropeworks residents is homogeneous up to a point since everybody's address is 1 Arboretum Place. Their physical location works to stabilise the conception of Ropeworks as a public. At the same time, tenure schemes work to destabilise the same public since, for example, a resident-owner invests more time in their investment and is willing to spend more time at Town Square, while the relationship of temporary tenants to the place might be more transient and superficial.

Because it recognises the presence of both unity and disunity in the everyday (both formal system and informal interaction), Bakhtin's theories frame publics as inherently ambivalent. The feelings I had on site or looking at demographics, coupled with the vagueness of social groups reported or represented in interviews turned out to make sense when the public realm is observed through the lens of dialogism and understood as social heteroglossia. Conflicting references in interviews between wholes and their parts, between idealised forms and everyday actions, are a matter of dialogue.

US AND THEM

Mary's identification of Barking Central as her new home, as described above, in spite of her critique of its architecture indicates something interesting with respect to alterity and social heteroglossia. In her case (and perhaps also to a certain extent for Sebastian and Nadine) she seems to have mapped the identity of Barking Central, the aesthetics and publics of regeneration onto the whole of Barking. For her it is the rest of the town and Borough that are other. This excerpt from my fieldnotes follows our meeting at the BLC café:

> While we have our tea a scene breaks out in the plaza with a group of dodgy looking white people: some shouting between woman and man as kid watches. Two PCSOs walk by, slow down, say something, the woman shouts back, they keep walking. Mary attempts to avoid them altogether. She tells me not to look because they will come here and give us trouble. I can tell she feels really bothered. She tells me she is not scared in the area. 'We live in the nice part.' That it's good they knocked down those council blocks [Gascoigne Estate] because that's where the

> problem was. […] She says that if you go further into Dagenham or Romford on the estates you'll get shot. If you have a car they'll steal it or slash your car, they have guns, and so forth. I tell her it's not that bad. 'Don't you watch the news?', she asks, before going through the latest horror stories.[209]

What struck me during our conversation was that hers was the view of somebody from outside the Borough, not from inside. Maybe for somebody living in the 'spaceship' of Barking Central—as it was once described to me by a resident of Ropeworks—the rest of the Borough is indeed another world. Mary identifies with the gentrifying public of Barking Central to the extent that they are not like those 'other people'. She identifies with anybody in the development willing to build relationships between neighbours, as opposed to the more transient and disinterested others. In fact, looking at any of the examples of publics given above reveals that one of their defining characteristics is alterity. All of them exist by virtue of defining themselves (or being defined) in contrast or in relation to other publics. Residents of the Town Centre make sense in relation to residents of the rest of Barking or Dagenham, the elderly with younger generations or recently immigrated communities, the BLC and library publics with the publics of the 1974 library, and the Council always conceived as an autonomous entity external to everyone (even for those within the organisation). The dialogic principle of alterity appears to hold true for publics: they cannot be conceived outside the relations that link it to others.

In her book *The Democratic Paradox*, Chantal Mouffe argues for a similar conception of social and political groups. She holds that the rational discursive model of the public realm overlooks the crucial difference (she rests her argument on Derrida's notion of *différance*) inherent to any act of identification. Unity is only conceivable, she argues, in plurality and difference. 'Difference', she writes, 'is the condition of the possibility of constituting unity and totality at the same time that it provides their essential limits.'[210] For her this insures the derivation of a resilient model that can account for patterns of inclusion and exclusion and the power that such patterns are based on. Rather than erasing distinctions between publics (or institutions) we should work to bring these distinctions to the fore so they can be challenged.[211] Habermas himself, responding to his critics, admits that 'a mechanism of exclusion that locks out and represses at the same time calls forth countereffects that cannot be neutralized'[212] The same ideas find resonance in Michael

[209] FN20100421. During the same conversation Mary told me that in her contract the developer has pledged never to have social housing in the building. She says she can actually sue the developer if it ever happens. I was not able to verify this claim.
[210] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 33.
[211] Mouffe, p. 34.
[212] Habermas, 'Further Reflections', p.427. Habermas confesses to only having understood the potential of 'plebeian' culture after having read Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World*. This passage in his 'Further Reflections' deals explicitly with the rise of the bourgeois public sphere but not necessarily with its modern version.

Warner's notion of a *counterpublic* which describes the counter-reaction to the normalising tendencies of imagining publics in the first place. As Warner writes: 'Publics exist only by virtue of their imagining. They are a kind of fiction that has taken on life.'[213] A counterpublic, then, is the reaction of groups and individuals against their abstraction by others into publics. Here the mechanisms of exclusion could either be the real strategies of gentrification, for example, but also the exclusionary mechanism implied by the invention of publics as described in Chapter 3. Drawing the boundary of any public, then, is a decisive action that implies authority, difference and contestation. Identifying one public (even those of which we are part of) constitutes drawing a boundary between this one and others. For Mouffe, drawing a frontier between 'us' and 'them' constitutes a 'democratic requisite'.[214] This act, as described above in social heteroglossia, is ideological (even unconsciously so) because it happens within an ideologically saturated field (for Bakhtin the field of language), further stabilising and destabilising (challenging) a particular unitary ideal. Warner further suggests that for any public to work its 'form must be embedded in the background and self-understanding of its participants.'[215] We can restate what was discussed in Chapter 3 about reducing the knowledge gap between real and imagined publics differently by saying that the closer our conception of publics is to everyday life (and its embedded forces) the more resilient this conception will be.

Dialogic identity

The previous chapter briefly touched upon how the principle of alterity describes how difference and otherness are constitutive of identity. Such identity, Jeffrey Nealon writes, is 'beholden and responsive first and foremost to the other.'[216] Rather than being given, identity is formed in the dialogical encounter with the other.[217] Identity is, in other words, an act.[218] From case study evidence, it appears as though the identity of publics is similarly constructed. Social heteroglossia, after all, describes how various individuals and groups can be identified by and through their dialogic relations with each other. A closer examination of the dynamics of identity formation in dialogue is required, here, tying alterity with social heteroglossia into the notion of dialogic publics.

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[213] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York, NY: Zone Books, 2002), p. 8.
[214] Mouffe, p. 48.
[215] Warner, p. 9.
[216] Jeffrey Thomas Nealon, *Alterity Politics: Ethics and Performative Subjectivity* (Duke University Press, 1998), p. 2.
[217] See Margaret Somers, 'Citizenship and the Place of the Public Sphere: Law, Community, and Political Culture in the Transition to Democracy', *American Sociological Review*, 58 (1993), 587–620 (n. 4). Somers distances herself from the Habermasian notion that identities are formed prior to engagement in the public sphere.
[218] Nealon, *Alterity Politics*, p. 2. Nealon uses the expression 'performative identity'.

The process by which *dialogical* identity is formed is the same as the two-stage aesthetic activity described in the previous chapter. 'The result of a dialogical encounter', Grant Kester writes, 'is to open both participants to the "excess" that is made possible by the provisional blurring of boundaries between self and other.'[219] For Bakhtin, this is explained by the spatial and temporal relationship between two human beings.

> When I contemplate a whole human being who is situated outside and over against me, our concrete, actually experienced horizons do not coincide. For at each moment, regardless of the position and the proximity to me of this other human being whom I am contemplating, I shall always see and know something that he, from his place outside and over against me, cannot see himself.[220]

Because I occupy a unique position in space and time, everybody else is situated outside of me. This means that I can never perceive myself holistically. As Bakhtin further writes, I may approximate this perception by receiving the other's excess, that is, by momentarily imagining a position outside myself looking back at myself. What 'restructures' my architectonic self then is 'my outward image being affirmed and founded in emotional and volitional terms *out* of the other and *for* the other human being.'[221] Understood in these terms, identity is a gift from the other. As Mireya Folch-Serra writes: 'I get my identity from you, and you get your identity from me.'[222] This gift of excess becomes crucial in understanding the relationship between identity and alterity. As Nealon writes, when identity is based on lack rather than excess, it turns the subject into an effect rather than an act.[223] He continues:

> As long as identity is not thematized as a hazardous performative *act* [...] it seems destined to remain a locus for resentment, naming itself always in terms of its expropriation from an ideal that it can't ever hope, and does not even wish, to attain.[224]

In other words, identity has to be based on alterity first without the hope of future sameness. For Nealon, this is the crucial difference between identity as politics versus identity as alterity. The former assumes that wholeness is possible, i.e. someone in the process is an architect because of professional affiliation and by contract, while the latter embraces the idea that wholeness is impossible and that participants in a public have 'overlapping identities'[225], i.e. the same person is never only an architect with respect to the process, they are *also* an architect. Nor can identity be based on sameness first, since this

[219] Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p. 122.
[220] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 22.
[221] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 30.
[222] Folch-Serra, p. 265.
[223] Nealon, *Alterity Politics*, p. 11.
[224] Nealon, *Alterity Politics*, p. 12.
[225] Somers, p. 589.

leads to a subject defined by lack. I am not a subject because of something I lack with respect to the other, but because of something I have in excess to the other. In different terms, this is also the position Chantal Mouffe argues for when she states that difference is both the necessary condition for unity as it is its 'essential limit'.

Interviews are good measures of how dialogic identity is performed. They are in many ways simpler than events involving groups, but can nevertheless inform the idea that publics are performed in similar fashion, not unlike how Bakhtin's encounter between self and other serves as the starting point for many of his more social concepts. Over the course of a single interview, interlocutors will use a range of voices and tones. These define the overlapping identities of each person, their changing relation to the other participant(s) in the conversation and the intentional meaning given to their utterances (earnest, ironic, factual, serious, comic). A good example of this is my interview with Charles Fairbrass. At the time of the interview, February 2010, Charles Fairbrass was Mayor of the LBBD and Councillor for Heath ward. Within the hour of our talk, a range of different personas emerge and overlap but without necessarily merging completely. There is Charles Fairbrass, resident of Barking: 'I'll be frank. I wouldn't live in that block here [the Ropeworks]. I've never known a bathroom where you can sit on the loo and wash your hands at the same time!'; Mayor Fairbrass, leader of the Ceremonial Council: 'I made sure all their national flags were flown in the school;' and Councillor Fairbrass, member of the Assembly and decision-making committees:

> We had a bit of a row with the architects who wanted to put a huge sign on top that said 'Barking' so you could see it from the A13. I said 'well if you don't know where you are when you are coming from the A13...'

In this next passage, we move from resident and Councillor to family member, father and husband, and finally to someone who is about to retire and expresses incredulity about recent societal changes:

> And that's one of our problems [in the Borough], we lose too many of our young people too quickly. They move away. I've got a son, he's got his degree, he's up in Yorkshire, he's quite happy up there. My wife, her son lives in Yorkshire. They got on and they wanted to spread their wings. With modern communications, people actually commute now from Calais! That's modern life…

After I asked a question about elderly residents who look critically at demographic changes in the Borough, he distances himself from his own demographic age group and those who, like him, migrated from the east end of London during the blitz and after the war:

> You're talking about people my age who do not like demographic change. I don't mind it. A person is a person, as far as I'm concerned.

> But they forget where they came from. They all came as I did from the east end of London.[226]

The many voices of the interviewee sometimes come into conflict with each other and sometimes seem to merge, but only temporarily, never as a synthesis nor cancelling each other out. These identities are also modified dialogically during the process of the interview itself. My interview with Charles Fairbrass is, in other words, a performed identity as situated in the dialogue of the interview. And of course there are the identities that we both project on each other. I am there first of all speaking to the Mayor of the Borough; this is who I contacted, who my supervisor contacted and whose personal assistant responded and set up a meeting with me. We met in the Mayor's parlour at Barking Town Hall, ceremonial, softly lit and wood-panelled while his official car waited outside on the new Town Square. Similarly, my interviewee is first speaking to a Canadian researcher and an outsider to the Borough. His own responses, which stabilise or destabilise some of his overlapping identities (or affiliation to a public), are situated in the context to my own questions and responses.

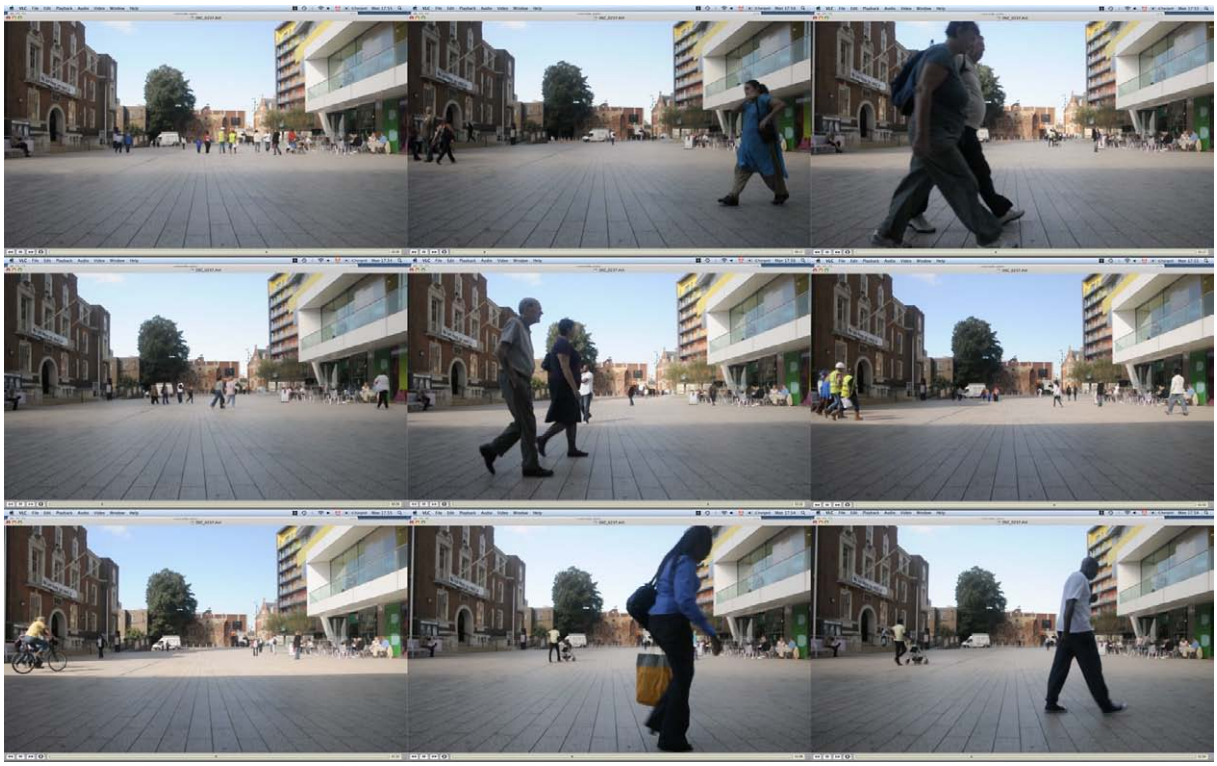
The dynamics of dialogue reflected in my discussion with Charles Fairbrass are symptomatic of every interview I have done. Furthermore, they are applicable to the dialogic identity of both individuals and publics in general. An event like the crack-down on Library staff reading out loud in the market on World Book Day 2010 involves a complex performance of projected identities (library, market management, Council, library staff members, market patrons, etc.), immediate interaction that stabilises or destabilises these identities (confrontation between library director and market manager, encounters between staff and market patrons, my presence as a researcher, etc.) and cannot be described (the event or its participants) without resorting to alterity relations.

Having now developed the concept of dialogic publics through alterity and social heteroglossia, the next chapter will explore two further aspects of the concept by evaluating one particular claim: that local residents were consulted and had their say in the early stages of the project for the Town Square.

[226] This quote and all previous, INT20100225B.

Plate 18

Video stills from observations at Town Square, September 2009.



13:00. Having lunch on the Square. The café tables are full. Some council workers having lunch on the benches. There are children playing on the stage ramp and steps. The demographics on the Square are all over the place. Impossible to generalise except as 'general'.

FN20090925.

Plate 19

Barking Market on East Street.

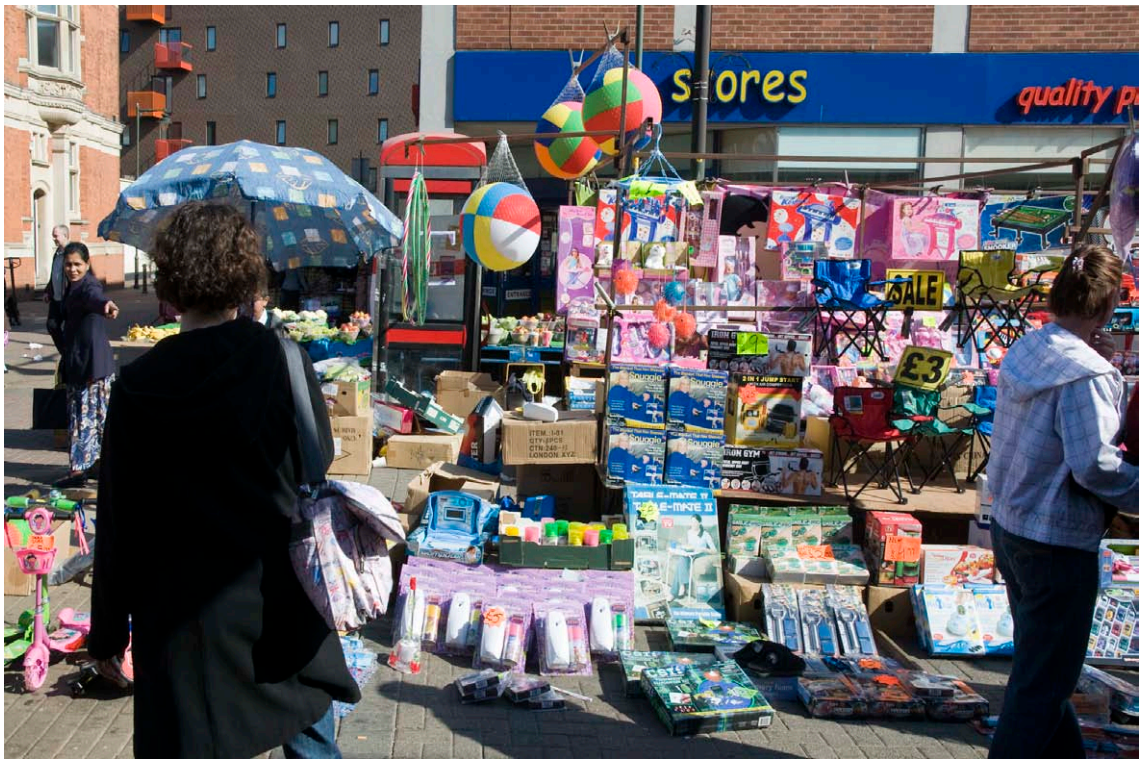


Plate 20

Library staff canvassing at Blake's Corner on World Book Day, March 2010.

Market management quickly shut down the Library's 'read aloud' session at Blake's Corner because they did not have proper permission.

'A dog chasing its own tail' a friend would later comment.

Plate 21

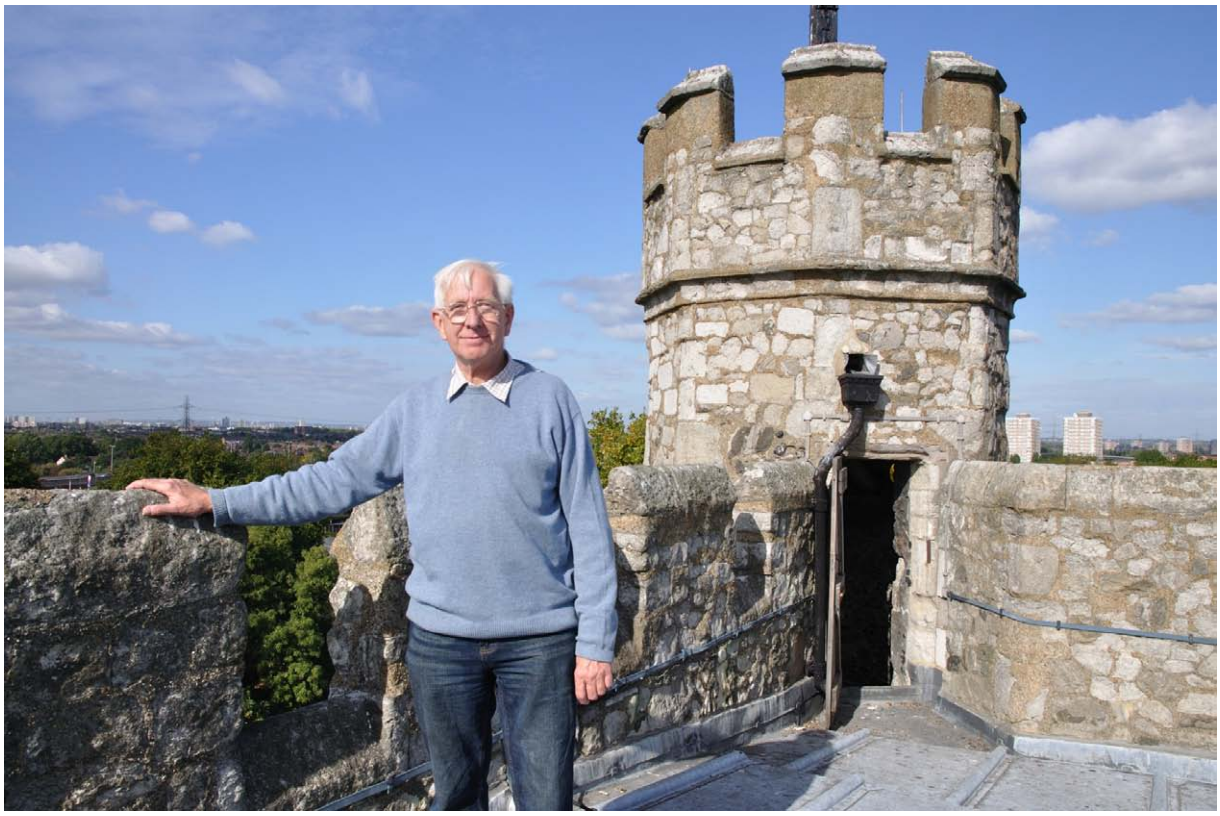
Steve and Thom in front of Barking Station, September 2009.

9am. I stand outside the train station (listed building) taking photos. The area is full of people moving. Once again I am surprised by the number of people present. An officer accosts me: 'Are you taking good pictures?' Yes. He explains that they need to accost anybody taking photos of the train station. I am just taking photos of the train station and Barking for research. 'Why Barking?!' He asks this in the most incredulous tone. I explain the case study and ask him whether he would mind if we spoke for while. […] I ask him if it is OK to take a photo (for research purposes). He not only agrees, but takes me to the other side of the street where three other officers are talking. He grabs Thom out the lot and they pose for a photo.

FN20090925.

Plate 22

Peter Midlane at the top of St Margaret church, October 2009.



Our congregation, when I was a boy, was completely white. But now it's probably 60-65% black Africans. The rest is... all over the world! We have Chinese, we've got Asians, probably got representatives from most countries, we have South Americans, South Africans, all sorts.

Peter Midlane, INT20091002.

Plate 23

Gascoigne Estate chit-chat group, November 2009.

Dear Thomas,
I have an over 50's group who would be delighted to talk to you, however this group runs every Tuesday morning 10:00am – 12:00pm. If you could get into Barking on a Tuesday morning I will introduce you to them.
Lorraine

Hi Thomas,
Could you meet me at the Neighbourhood Management Office, which is situated next door to the chip shop, in the parade of shops in the centre of the Gascoigne Estate. It's just a little way away from the Community Centre. If you ask anyone you see on the Estate where the shops are they will point you in the right direction.
See you tomorrow
Lorraine

Emails received from Gascoigne Neighbourhood Management.

Plate 24

Joyce and Ron Petchey at their house on Upney Lane, November 2009.

You'll want to get in touch with Joyce Petchey... This lady, she's about 80, but she's really on the ball. Her and her husband are still dowers at St Margaret's church.

Ron Nicholls, INT20090716.

Plate 25

'Upney Lane 1929-2009', a talk by Joyce Petchey to the Barking and District Historical Society, October 2009.

At the end of her talk, Joyce urges all of us to go and ride bus number 62 to Becontree, where her butcher is: 'If you haven't got a good butcher go there. I'm always meeting George on the 62 bus. It is like a country bus.' Chairman John Blake, who said he lived on the number 62 route, added 'believe me after Upney they cease speaking English!' While the audience laughed and spoke up Joyce replied 'now John notice I haven't mentioned anything about…' and changed the subject to buggies.

As I waited in line to ask her for an interview, I heard Joyce comment: 'I have seen more change in the last ten years than in all my life.'

Plate 26

East Street, 2011.

People would always talk about the decline of [inaudible] in the Town Centre. That's why I decided on the two butcher shops. Suddenly this butcher shop opened up and it was the way meat was displayed that was sort of alien to the local Barking people. [...] In that town that butcher shop is a symbol of something unchanging and timeless... When I wasn't filming people in the butcher shop would be so much more aggressive and so much more forthcoming.

Marc Isaacs, INT20100210.

Well, everything these newcomers are… Let me just start with the butcher shops. How many butchers are not halal butchers anymore?

Rita, INT20091002C.

Plate 27

The REC before their eviction from North Street, 2010.

Sheila Delaney: Nobody feels responsible except for some amorphous 'them'. Whoever 'them' are, they're not us!...

TBK: How are the newer communities reacting to regeneration?

SD: In very much the same way [as older communities], perhaps more violently against sometimes. They ask the same question that I've heard asked and I've asked myself ten or fifteen years ago: 'When we redevelop, where are the poor people going to be living?' 'Wahwhaha, affordable housing...' How affordable is affordable?

INT20100517.

Plate 28

Future site of the Freshwharf Estate on the south side of River Roding (top), and Seawall Court 'contemporary apartments' (bottom), 2010.

'The Borough's Local Development Framework Core Strategy accepts the London Plan housing targets and acknowledges that Barking Town Centre will make a significant contribution to meeting them by delivering some 6,000 additional homes over the plan period (10 to 15 years).'

LBBD, 'Planning for the Future of Barking Town Centre', 2009, sec. 4.38.

1.4 VISIONS OF THE FUTURE

The preceding chapter developed the notion of dialogic identity to show that the identity of participants or publics with respect to the Town Square project had to be understood as a particular situation, one in which contradictions between projections and social heteroglossia had to be expected. In this chapter, which closes Part I, the notion of dialogic identity is further tested and adapted in relation to a particular event in the development of the Town Square. In February 2000 the projects of the five finalists in the Barking Town Square competition were exhibited in the now demolished 1974 library.[227] Visitors were invited to vote for their favourite scheme and leave comments. Both the *Post*[228] and the *Recorder*[229] ran articles covering the exhibition (Figure 18 and Figure 19).

Figure 18. *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 9 February 2000. Jeremy Grint is pictured at bottom right.

[227] The competition was between five developer-led design teams shortlisted from an open call for the mixed-use project of the Barking Town Square. The programme included the main components of the completed Barking Central (residential blocks, commercial space, library, and public space). The teams were Urban Catalyst/Avery, Panter Hudspith, McAllister, A2 Urban Studio, and Berkeley Partnership Homes. I only found partial information about the selection process from Jeremy Grint, who said the Regeneration office drafted a report on the proposals that was submitted to the Council's Executive Committee.

[228] Kelly Harrison, 'Presenting Visions of the Future', *Barking and Dagenham Post* (Barking & Dagenham, 9 February 2000), pp. 24–5.

[229] James Buttery, 'A Square Deal for Artists', *Barking and Dagenham Recorder* (Barking & Dagenham, 10 February 2000), p. 17.

Recorder, Thursday, February 10, 2000 17(BD)

● ROOF GARDENS: Urban Catalyst's plan

● JUDGE: Jeremy Grint with a model of the Panter Hudspith design

● SIXTIES STYLE: An artist's impression of AZ Urban Studio's design

A Square deal for artists

MORE THAN £10m is to be spent on redeveloping Barking Town Square.

Five proposals, all of which will be privately financed, have been shortlisted from 23 applications made by architects, artists, designers and development firms.

Now the shortlisted designs are on public display at Barking Central Library to gauge public opinion.

A panel of Barking and Dagenham Council members and officers, as well as outside advisors such as A13 Artscape project manager Jeremy Grint, has been set up to select one of the proposals on February 28. Their decision will take into account the public vote.

But the final decision will go to the council's land use sub committee in March.

The completed redevelopment of the paved area between the Town Hall and the library, is expected to be open for use between 2003 and 2004.

One proposal, from Panter Hudspith Architects, would include an extended library, lights set into the town square paving – which would change colour with the weather – and a water feature linked directly with the River Roding.

Possibly the most controversial design is by renowned artist Thomas Heatherwick.

His idea, built using a local workforce, would feature a 'giant pebble' which appears to have been dropped from the sky and shattered on the paving. The different shards would be buildings constructed in green copper.

Berkeley Partnership Homes' design features a supermarket, cafes and restaurants and several 'light-box' sculptures.

AZ Urban Studio have planned a multi-coloured 60s-style main structure with curved pebble-like buildings opposite.

The final design, from Urban Catalyst Ltd, features two copper-coloured, tiered five-storey buildings with roof gardens that form a performance area between them.

REPORT: JAMES BUTTERY

FIVE DESIGNS SHORTLISTED IN DRAMATIC REVAMP PROJECT

● BEFORE: Town Square as it looks now

● STONED: Thomas Heatherwick's design would have buildings designed like the pieces of a broken green pebble

Figure 19. *Barking and Dagenham Recorder*, 10 February 2000. 'Judge Jeremy Grint' is pictured at centre.

Jeremy Grint, A13 Artscape project manager at the time, is pictured in both, standing stern-looking behind a scale model of one of the five proposals. In the *Post*, Mr Grint is quoted saying: 'We are encouraging people to visit the exhibition, and the panel will take into account what they have said.'[230] While the exhibition remained open until 23 March the decision on the design was to be made on 28 February, twenty-five days after the opening of the exhibition and nineteen days after media coverage. A report to the Executive Committee including the public's choice would have been prepared before that day by Jeremy Grint and his team.[231] In our second interview, Jeremy Grint recalls part of the decision making process:

> TBK: What was the result of the comments box?
>
> JG: I think... Well, that's an interesting point. In some ways there wasn't... It certainly wasn't wildly antagonistic to any of the proposals. I don't think, in the scheme of things, the people that made the effort to comment were largely commenting from a considered point of view. It wasn't in the sense of 'oh God that's ghastly.' But the lower, the schemes that looked less developed tended to be favoured, really. So the Avery scheme was quite popular in there.
>
> TBK: Sorry but you said the ones that were not developed too much were actually–

[230] Jeremy Grint, quoted in Harrison, 'Presenting Visions of the Future', p. 25.
[231] I was not able to find a copy of this document nor any other document relating to the competition apart from the brochure *Future Vision* (LBBD, 2000).

> JG: I mean that in the sense that the people commented. They didn't comment from the point of view of 'oh I hate that' or... In a way, the people that responded weren't very representative of the community.[232]

In Jeremy Grint's opinion, then, what may have better represented the community would have been comments in the spirit of 'I hate that' or 'that's ghastly' rather than what he judged to be 'considered' comments. Also, because most comments appeared rational in his mind and came from people that 'made the effort', the result did not necessarily represent the community because it came from a select group of people: the public of the exhibition. It is hard to imagine what responses, in this sense, would have been representative of the Town Centre's community.[233]

In spite of the report produced and the panel of judges, Jeremy Grint recalls that in the end, the final decision rested with the Leader of the Council at the time, Charles Fairbrass. For Jeremy Grint the result of the consultation seemed a little vague and non-representative but Charles Fairbrass expressed more confidence: 'This was all done by public competition. The public gave their opinion on which building they liked best and the winner was built.'[234] This statement by Charles Fairbrass is problematic on a fundamental level because it links popular choice with the completed project.[235] As planner Dave Mansfield describes, the finished project had little to do with the original competition scheme:

> Well, it was a public competition in fact and yes, one of the designs was chosen as the favourite of the public. And I remember that the Ark featured very strongly in that. Obviously what has been built differs quite significantly from the original master plan, but that was my first recollection. It was a little bit before my personal involvement.[236]

That the completed project differs from the original conceptual scheme is nothing outrageous unless we insist that local residents had a say in the final decision. While the next chapters have more details about the morphology of the project, what needs to be brought out here is what the above statement might wrongly imply about publics: that the public who voted on the scheme in 2000 is the public of the completed project. As we have seen in the previous chapters, the belief in a homogeneous public over time is fraught with issues. Publics have performative, transient and heterogeneous identities, as do the

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[232] INT20101104.
[233] The same issue will be raised in Chapter 3.3 in relation to an exhibition organised by muf in 2007.
[234] Charles Fairbrass, INT20100225B. In fact Mr Fairbrass still remembered his preferred scheme, the one by Thomas Heatherwick not Avery, but added that he realised the project needed 'more space' to be able to look at it. The Heatherwick scheme, in retrospect, quite dramatically negates any local context (see Figure 19 above, bottom right). When I told this to Jeremy Grint he was surprised thinking that Charles Fairbrass had supported the Avery scheme.
[235] For notes on the selected project see Appendix R.
[236] INT20100511. The Ark refers to a curved building nicknamed the 'Barking ship'.

individual who constitute them. In Barking, those who may have voted in 2000 for the Avery scheme would not recognise the completed project. After all, the most prominent and locally iconographic element, a boat-shaped building nicknamed the 'ark', was discarded a long time ago. DfL director Mark Brearley recalls how politicians (including Charles Fairbrass) would keep bringing up the aesthetics of the original Avery scheme:

> The offices involved understood that they [the Council] were choosing a development partner whereas the politicians involved were convinced that they had chosen a competition-winning scheme. So they, being Leader of the Council, were constantly saying 'well where's my scheme, where's the thing I remember, that ship-shaped fancy thing with hanging plants on it?'[237]

Given the transient nature of communities in the Town Centre it is also unlikely that ten years later the voting public would still be intact. This transience (both in and out migration) is the reason why ten years later, during my workshop for the local authorities, Janice Hunte, who is in charge of coordinating events and venues for the Borough, can complain about the completed Town Square and wonder why nobody ever asked her for her opinion. Also, the majority of residents at Barking Central, as we saw, come from outside and therefore were not in Barking at the time of the competition and its parallel exhibition. For them, public consultation simply never took place.

Establishing a direct link, as Charles Fairbrass did above, between the public of the 2000 exhibition and the public of the completed project raises two further issues with respect to dialogic publics. In the first place, in addition to being predicated on relations of alterity, publics have to be conceived as contingent on both temporal and spatial factors. Because identity is performed as an interaction between various entities, it will change continuously over time as this interaction changes. Referring to the Council in relation to planning decisions made on the Town Square means something completely different whether we are referring to decisions made pre- or post-2005, the year when the LTGDC took over planning authority for the Town Centre. The library-going public was not the same for the demolished 1974 library as it now is for the BLC, let alone the brief period when the library was relocated to the Vicarage Field shopping mall (2004-2007). What also comes across from the evidence is that publics are similarly contingent on spatial factors. At a larger scale urban development and spatial regeneration are directly affecting the publics of the Town Centre, particularly with respect to housing issues. Residents of Barking Central appeared to be self-aware of their identity as a single public predicated on their living spaces, with some of them, like Mary, making sharp distinctions between themselves and other residents of the Borough. The library's territory as a public of the

[237] INT20100727.

Town Centre was sharply delineated on World Book Day. Time and space, in all these instances, are intertwined and cannot be isolated as factors independently affecting identity. Each public, as it were, expresses a spatiotemporal unit that can be conceptualised using Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope* or 'places of intersection of temporal and spatial sequences.'[238] The chronotope is an analytical tool that allows the fixation of time and space to describe something that may otherwise be constantly changing: the chronotope of the open plan (as a historical design concept), for example, expressed in the publics of the BLC library;[239] the chronotopes of regeneration and the Urban Renaissance expressed in the publics of Barking Central;[240] or, as was made evident above, the chronotope of the exhibition-going public of 2000 versus later chronotopes of the Town Square's publics.

Another particular case for which chronotopes are paramount in understanding the Town Square project is in relation to the project team. The project for the Town Square lasted a little over ten years, from 1999 to 2010. Of the original design team that won the competition (Figure 20), nobody was left in 2010 when the project was completed.[241] At the beginning of 2006, when phase one was barely off the ground, the entire design team had been replaced and the original competition winning design overhauled. The only participants who oversaw the project from start to finish were members of the LBBD.[242]

Figure 20. Newspaper photo of the original Town Square design team. From left to right: Shelagh Wakely, LBBD Council Leader Charles Fairbrass, Ken Dytor (UC), Neil Porter and Bryan Avery. Source: *Barking and Dagenham Recorder*, 16 March 2000

[238] Folch-Serra, p. 261. While the concept of the chronotope is introduced here to locate the conception of publics in time and space, it will be further developed in Part II as an analytical tool for public space.
[239] Librarians complained that they had lost their older members in the move to the BLC who find the new space too open and not intimate enough, but that at the same time they had gained ground with younger generations who regularly filled the space.
[240] The expression Urban Renaissance refers to the 1999 report prepared by the Urban Task Force (led by Richard Rogers). See Urban Task Force; and also Dermot Calpin, 'An Urban Renaissance in East London', *The MJ: Supplement*, 2008, pp. 2–3. The latter reference uses the Town Square as a particular example of Urban Renaissance principles. See also Chapter 2.3.
[241] AHMM took over from Avery in 2002. Muf was hired in 2004. Redrow took over the project from UC in 2006 and brought in their own contractors Ardmore to replace Wates. See timeline in Appendix C.
[242] These included Charles Fairbrass, Peter Watson, Jeremy Grint and Dave Mansfield.

Given the development of the project it becomes difficult to speak of the architect or the developer as fixed entities. The developer of Barking Central, for example, is officially Redrow, but not if we understand the developer (or the client) to have been performed by both UC and Redrow over time. Moreover, in line with the principle of alterity, changes of participants filling up official roles affect relationships between other participants, in turn affecting the identity of all. Muf and AHMM designing in 2006 (employed by Redrow), for example, are not muf and AHMM designing in 2005 (employed by UC).

The second issue to be raised by Charles Fairbrass' comment has to do with the responsibility of drawing boundaries around particular individuals or groups. For Bakhtin, being is conceived as an event because each situation occurs only once in space and time.[243] Nothing actually is given; everything is in a constant state of becoming. While identity is understood to be in time because it is performed, the same reasoning means identity is equally (or simultaneously) in space because of the aesthetic relationship implied by dialogue. As we saw, the notion of dialogic identity means there is an exchange of information between two or more entities as the result of their particular situation in space and time and what this gives them in terms of an excess of perception. But although everyday interactions might be inflected with ideological qualities (both authority and its potential subversion), they do not necessarily in themselves constitute political or transformative action. The problem, as Hirschkop argues, is that we can grant that societies are made up of diverse and other languages but not that each of these 'genres' has ideological significance.[244] As he writes, heteroglossia is 'a fantasy, a projection of the aesthetic ideal of the novel back onto society as a whole.'[245] Yet we may take the principle of heteroglossia as a model for society, rather than a simple literary aesthetic notion. In a later work, Hirschkop reminds us that dialogism is not a description of actual speech, but a philosophical idea:

> Dialogue is not an innocent or open procedure, either: it is the search for that great white whale of the liberal imagination, compromise, a search which rules out certain kinds of solution in advance. Like the term 'democracy' itself, 'dialogue' sanctions a strategic call for specific procedures under the rubric of abstract principle.[246]

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[243] Bakhtin develops this idea throughout *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, trans. by Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993).
[244] Ken Hirschkop, 'Heteroglossia and Civil Society: Bakhtin's Public Square and the Politics of Modernity', in *Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, 4 vols. (London: SAGE, 2002), II, 173–182 (p. 177).
[245] Hirschkop, II, p. 177. Hirschkop notes that rather than describing things as they are, Bakhtin projects heteroglossia onto society through the novel which accounts for a 'novellisation' of the entire world.
[246] Ken Hirschkop, *Mikhail Bakhtin: An Aesthetic for Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 9.

Heteroglossia writ large onto society is also an abstract philosophical idea which 'rules out certain kinds of solution in advance'.[247] In this sense, Hirschkop relates the principle of heteroglossia with the political notion of civil society.[248] This does not, however, contradict his earlier point that the diversity of heteroglossia or civil society automatically means individuals and/or groups have ideological significance or are acting politically. Indeed, according to Craig Calhoun, the crucial difference between civil society and the public sphere is that the former refers to the diverse individuals and groups that make up society while the latter describes what happens when these individuals and groups organise and start acting as publics.[249] Similarly, heteroglossia does not describe the actions of individuals and groups rather than the existence of individuals and groups themselves. Political and ideological relevance is then to be found in actions (including speech), hence the requirement for an aesthetic relationship between one and another and the significance of how identity is acted out in everyday interactions, contingent on relations of alterity, perception, time and space.

Significantly, Chantal Mouffe argues for something similar with respect to dialogic approaches in political theory, writing that while these are good they rarely account for the inevitable end of dialogue. That is, there is an issue with taking dialogue as an unending process. At some point, Mouffe argues, dialogue has to close and decisions have to be made. The main issue is that such a model is 'unable to come to terms with "the political" in its antagonistic dimension.'[250] That is, the failure or the cessation of dialogue always implies decisions and the exercise of authority.[251] Mouffe, therefore, argues that significance has to be given to the act, which as a unique moment in an interaction (ending or continuing), turns values into form, so to speak, and makes visible the various forces at play.

Granting that publics exist in an ambivalent state between ideal projections and everyday actions brings us to a similar conclusion that needs to account for the responsibility of individuals defining themselves and others, patterns of inclusion and exclusion, and relations of authority. Both Hirschkop and Mouffe argue that it is in fact

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[247] In the preface to *An Aesthetic for Democracy*, Hirschkop makes the observation that democracy actually did not exist in the Russia Bakhtin wrote in. Bakhtin's political ideas about the diversity of voice in society, his emphasis on 'otherness', is read through Rabelais and Dostoevsky rather than in the everyday practices of twentieth-century Russia. Hence the argument that his writing infers an abstract philosophical (and political, if one chooses to read it thus) idea, a possible model for a society which does not concretely exist.

[248] Hirschkop, II, p. 179. Crucial here is the insistence that this relation is possible because in civil society the boundaries between traditionally distinct realms like public and private are put into question or simply abandoned.

[249] Craig Calhoun, 'Civil Society and the Public Sphere', *Public culture*, 5 (1993), 267 <doi:10.1215/08992363-5-2-267>.

[250] Mouffe, pp. 129–130.

[251] Mouffe, p. 75.

very different to describe the existence of various publics than to describe when these actually have significance (either ideologically or politically). What they also both argue for is that the connection between existence and significance lies in the act, in the individual responsibility of affirming or contesting the values and forces that make it possible to think about what defines a person or a public in the first place. This responsibility needs to be acknowledged for any model to adequately describe a heterogeneous and dialogic public realm.

The principles of alterity, exotopy, heteroglossia, dialogic identity and the chronotope define a model for the public realm which describes publics as existing only in relation to other publics, invented and emerging through dialogue, and in constant transformation. There is indeed no general public, but, instead, publics and other publics, publics within publics, publics overlapping with other publics and so on. Over the course of a single architectural project, publics will emerge, change and disappear. For the Town Square, the rate at which the identity of individuals and publics changed appeared much higher than the rate at which the project could be designed and constructed. Part III of the thesis will explore how design can be approached in order to engage with dialogic publics without relying on, or reverting to, abstractions, universals or imaginary consensus. For the moment, however, Part II will explore how the concepts developed here, those that underpin the idea of dialogic publics, similarly affect our conception of public space.

Part II

SPATIAL HETEROGLOSSIA

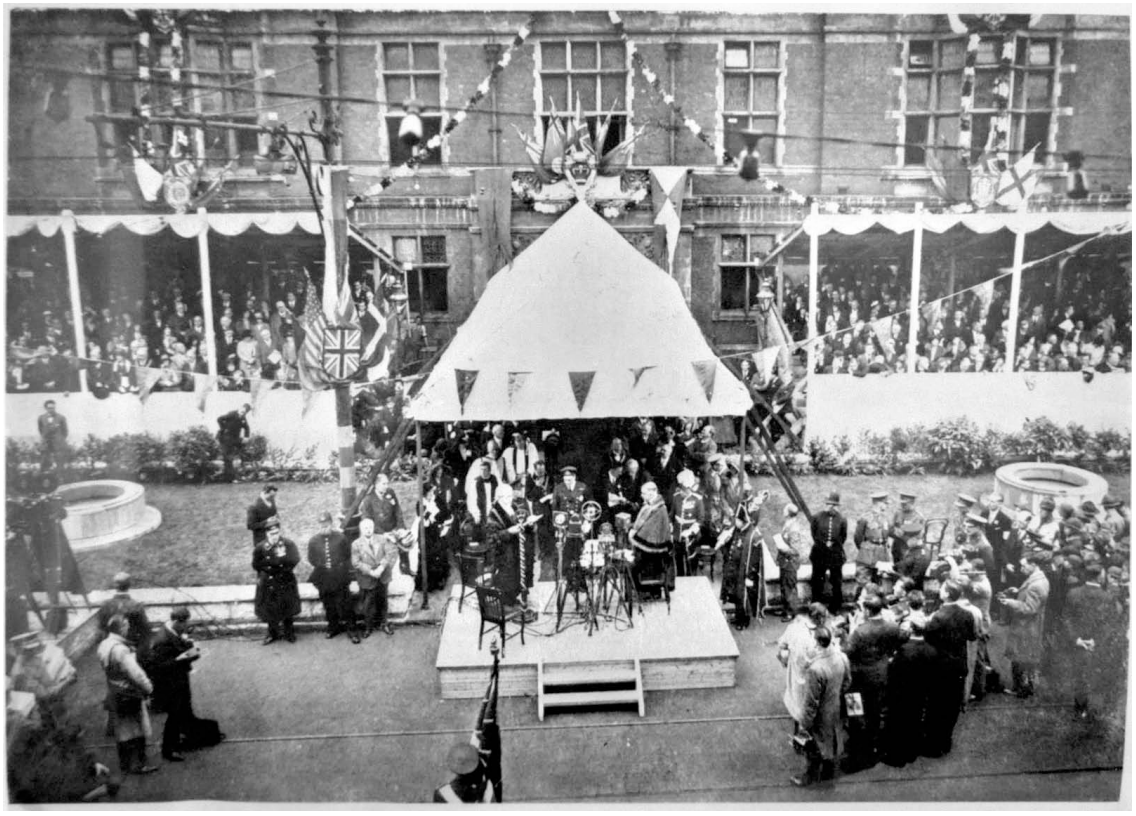

Figure 21. Prince George presenting the Charter of Incorporation to the Mayor of Barking, 1931.
Source: Valence House

2.1 PLAZA BARKING TOWN

> This award places Barking and Dagenham firmly on the international map.
>
> Councillor Sid Kallar, LBBD[252]

'Now', Mayor Charles Fairbrass tells me, 'that was against five hundred entries from Europe.'[253] The Mayor had just shown me, before our interview started, a brass plaque commemorating the project winning the 2008 EPUPS. The prize was given by the *Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona* (CCCB) and co-organised with similar organisations across Europe including London's Architecture Foundation. In 2008, Charles Fairbrass (then Leader of the Council) had personally flown to Barcelona to collect the award and two plaques, one kept in the Mayor's parlour at Barking Town Hall, the other set amidst the pink granite of the Square (Plate 29).

48 vida & artes EL PAÍS. miércoles 30 de abril de 2008

cultura

Vista de las arcadas del edificio de viviendas y servicios públicos en los bajos de Barking Town, que destaca por su señorial pavimentación.

Espacio público sin maquillar

La reforma de la plaza de Barking Town en Londres gana el V Premio Europeo de Espacio Público que organiza cada dos años el CCCB

CATALINA SERRA
Barcelona

tegrado por responsables de siete prestigiosas instituciones eu-

ciudadano con la arquitectura". En el caso de Barking Town

disimula la parte posterior de un supermercado y una arboleda.

Figure 22. Article announcing the result of the European Prize in *El País*, 30 April 2008.

The press release announcing the result of the EPUPS went out 29 April 2008. Several Spanish newspapers picked up the story and ran articles the following day (Figure 22).[254] Surprisingly, only three mentions of the result are found in the UK press within four

[252] Councillor Sid Kallar, quoted in Mayor of London and London Living Places, 'Shaping Places in London through Culture' (Greater London Authority, 2009), p. 34.
[253] INT20100225B.
[254] 'Una Plaza de Londres, Premio Europeo Al Mejor Espacio Público Urbano Del 2008', *La Vanguardia*, 30 April 2008, p. 38; Europa Press, 'Un Proyecto Londinense Se Lleva El V Premio Europeo Del Espacio Público Urbano', *El Mundo*, 30 April 2008; Montse Frisach, 'Premi a Londres', *AVUI* (Barcelona, 30 April 2008), p. 46; Maria Palau, 'L'arquitectura Britànica Eclèctica Guanya El 5è Premi Europeu de l'Espai Públic Urbà, Coorganitzat Pel CCCB', *El Punt*, 30 April 2008, p. 36; Catalina Serra, 'Espacio Público Sin Maquillar', *El País*, 30 April 2008, section Vida & artes, p. 48.

months of the announcement[255] even though the EPUPS had never been given to a project in the UK before then (Dublin's Smithfields Place won in 2000). The civic character of the project, highly praised by the Spanish media and the jury, as well as its aesthetics reminiscent of hard-surfaced South European squares, may have played in the project's favour. Indeed, the director of the CCCB, Josep Ramoneda, admits that the jury tends to favour projects based on the 'Mediterranean conception' of public space.[256] But *la Plaza Barking Town*, as it was translated in the Spanish media, struck many in Barking and London as foreign to England. 'We're becoming Europeanised', said Barking resident (and future Councillor) George Barratt when I asked him about the Square. He continued saying that there is no precedent for a Town Square in England; the idea is 'continental'.[257]

As with the opening ceremonies of Chapter 1.1, locating the Town Square in the discourse surrounding the EPUPS serves as a prologue to Part II. It begins to develop the themes of the entire part, introducing the connection between discourse and public space (something further developed in Chapter 7 into a dialogical framework for public space), how the Town Square expresses and is used to support particular positions (something extensively developed in Chapter 8), and how it challenges certain preconceptions and projections with respect to public space.

EXPORTING BARCELONA

The EPUPS was established in 2000 by the CCCB to 'offer testimony to the process of rehabilitation of public spaces that has been occurring in many European cities.'[258] This process was dramatically described as a 're-conquest' from land-development deregulation and the interests of market capitalism.[259] It is fitting that such a prize originated in Barcelona, a city often used as an example of successful regeneration going hand in hand with investment in the public realm. Indeed, the Catalan city experienced an alleged rebirth starting in the early 1980s which turned it into an acclaimed model of good urban planning and design.[260] Its belief in the positive connection between civic aspirations, collective

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[255] 'Muf's Barking Design Scoops Prize', *Building Design*, 2 May 2008, p. 2; Viv Groskop, 'The Dougnut Burbs', *The Evening Standard*, 16 July 2008, p. 22; Alison Greeves, 'A Precedent for Design', *LocalGov*, 2008 <http://www.localgov.co.uk> [accessed 10 July 2009].

[256] Josep Ramoneda quoted in Fredy Massad and Alicia Guerrero Yeste, 'Cuestión pública', *ABCD las artes y las letras*, 5 July 2008, pp. 38–39 (p. 39).

[257] Comment recorded following a meeting of Abbey and Gascoigne wards Neighbourhood Management on 11 November 2009 chaired by Mr Barratt.

[258] CCCB, 'Public Space: What It Is', *Public space*, para. 1 <http://www.publicspace.org/en/page/what-is-it> [accessed 25 July 2011].

[259] Josep Ramoneda, 'A Favor Del Espacio Público', in *La Reconquista de Europa: Espacio público urbano*, ed. by Albert Garcia Espuche (Diputación Provincial de Barcelona, 1999).

[260] See for example Guy Henry, Ida Hounkpatin and Stéphane Comby, *Barcelone: dix années d'urbanisme, la renaissance d'une ville* (Éditions du Moniteur, 1992); and Béatrice Sokoloff, *Barcelone ou comment refaire une ville* (Montréal, QC: PUM, 1999).

culture, the city's public realm and good urban design is not without recalling London's own 100PS programme (albeit cancelled after the mayoral election of 2008).

As Peter Rowe writes, one of the main innovations of Barcelona's public space programme was the *plaza dura* or hard surface square[261], consciously asserting the Mediterranean identity of the city through public space aesthetics: they were not a 'city of trees'. The celebration of the Barking Town Square by an organisation founded in Barcelona and likely run by design professionals active during the 1980s, or educated at the time, and its celebration in the Spanish press, is surely a testament as to the influence of the *plaza dura* aesthetics. This might be especially true given the fact that the prize was awarded when only phase one of the project was completed, its most prominent feature, an open civic square paved in pink Spanish granite.[262] Also, the diverse architectonic languages of the Town Square (noted by the jury) further connect the project to public space interventions in Barcelona. Two additional aspects of what we might now call the chronotope of Barcelona expressed in Barking are what Rowe highlights as two aspects of diversity explored in the Mediterranean city: a consciousness about different open-space functions and an appropriate level of indeterminacy in design.[263] This translated into an openness with respect to functionality, spaces that could accommodate multiple actions and events, and integrating indeterminate elements in the design for example play equipment or street furniture that did not readily signify the actions of play or sitting.

EXPANDING THE NOTION OF PUBLIC SPACE

The regulations document for the EPUPS makes a point of expanding an otherwise narrow view of public space. It states that the criteria for evaluation 'will not be exclusively related with the quality of the work from a strictly architectural point of view.'[264] It then expands this statement by listing five evaluation areas: functional aspects, social awareness, environmental aspects, citizen participation and transversal (or multidisciplinary) character. These themes express a vision of public space that goes beyond traditional architectural typology, one most public space projects still fail to grasp according to the EPUPS committee. The 2008 jury's report on the winning projects begins with some general remarks regarding all submissions. Apart from the general good 'qualitative improvement' of all projects, it notes the lack of innovation with respect to new conditions of public

[261] Peter G. Rowe, *Civic Realism* (The MIT Press, 1999), p. 54.
[262] The provenance of the granite is mentioned in every document and every time it comes up in conversation. Muf insist on this being one of the ethical battles of the project. Liza Fior: 'The first fight was about it being Spanish granite and not Chinese. It was an ethical dimension that we called the carbon footprint. It was also asserting a moral high ground (INT20091026).'
[263] Rowe, p. 51.
[264] CCCB, 'Rules: European Prize for Urban Public Space 2008' (CCCB (Barcelona), 2007).

space. The fault of this 'limited vision', it reads, would lie with 'the public administration's fear of opening up a discussion about public space and the lack of risk-taking commissions.'[265] Finally, it points out that any project of public space has to look beyond its boundaries and affect the city fabric as a whole: 'Increasingly, the idea of public space is being dangerously limited to a bounded surface area.'[266] Manuel de Solá-Morales, who presided the 2008 edition, is quoted in the Catalan press saying: 'We keep making projects for squares and streets, yet we [the jury] believe that in the contemporary city there are spaces which do not fall within these bounds but are public spaces nonetheless.'[267] In another article he is quoted describing muf's project as embodying some of the key aspirations of the prize:

> We wanted to valorise with this prize not a design, but a process, a methodology that seeks to combine the old with the new, the private and the public and the citizen's relation with architecture.[268]

The Barking Town Square, in this case and in spite of including a fairly traditional *plaza dura*, is taken as a counter-example to the trend and used to support an expanded notion of public space as well as criticism of municipal politics and visionary thinking across Europe. De Solá-Morales further states that one of the particular aspects of the project that set it apart was its elusiveness at falling within a set category or being defined in exact terms.[269] In other words, the project stands out because of its ambiguity in relation to strict notions of public space and design and development processes. Multiple actors and multiple architectural languages are argued by the jury to reflect complex aspects of the city.[270] The jury report reads:

> [The project] is a good example of how to regenerate an urban area and how to improve public space with a simultaneous action by the public and private sectors, bringing together the wishes of citizens and architectural invention to create a distinctive place. The project uses multiple architectural languages and assembles four interlocking elements to reflect a city's basic features: difference, plurality and even

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[265] Severi Blomstedt and others, 'Agreement on the Evaluation of Projects Presented to the Fifth European Prize for Urban Public Space', 2008.
[266] Blomstedt and others.
[267] Frisach. My translation. The original Catalan reads: 'Es continuen fent projectes de places i carrers, però creiem que a la ciutat contemporània hi ha espais que caldria que es tractesé…'
[268] Serra. My translation. The original Spanish reads: 'Hemos querido valorar en este premio no un diseño, sino un proceso, una manera de hacer en la que lo que se busca es combinar lo viejo y lo nuevo, lo privado y lo público y la relación del ciudadano con la arquitectura.'
[269] Serra.
[270] The multiple architects involved in the project and its public-private partnership led one commentator to underline the 'pure English manner' of the process (Frisach, p. 46). So while the Spanish reflect on the English manner of the project's funding and contractual scheme the English reflect on the Spanishness of the project's aesthetics.

> conflict. In addition, the project is a representative example of innovative solutions for the peripheries of European cities.[271]

Suggesting that the Town Square is a successful example of regeneration at this point in its development is closer to speculation than a reflection of reality.[272] 'It's funny', Sarah Butler once told me, 'because [the project] was successful before it opened…successful in terms of other people's expectations.'[273] It is true that even in 2009, at the start of my research, the incomplete project was already being described officially as a success of regeneration. Of course it must be considered that what the jury is doing is evaluating the Square as represented in the documents muf and the LBBD submitted to the CCCB[274] against their own values on public space. The jury's comments about the success of the Square are comments partly based on the promise of realising a future ideal of public space. The chronotope of the EPUPS for the Town Square then points to an incomplete project partly existing on paper, partly existing in the European critique of the project.[275]

The chronotope of the EPUPS also points to a particular definition of urban public space reflected in the (partially completed) project for the Town Square. The jury comments cited above reflect their view of public space and their attraction, in 2008, to questions of periphery, regeneration, dialogue, partnership and complexity. This raises a further question about the capacity of public realm design to address these particular issues. While the regulations of the prize are purposefully vague in defining 'public space' through its evaluation criteria, they make a sharper distinction in terms of the kind of project that may be submitted. They ask that the 'works or interventions in newly created or remodelled urban spaces that present for the prize must be public property or offer free access to the public.'[276] Two major things can be read from this. First, that the submitted project can be an intervention and therefore not a traditional permanent place; it can be a fragment, an insertion, an installation, and time-based. Second, that public ownership and free access are not both required; it is enough for the project to be either owned by a public body or be freely accessible by the larger public. This of course raises the question of whether a privately owned space that is freely accessible would be considered for the

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[271] Blomstedt and others.
[272] Especially if we understand the claim that the project reflects the needs of local citizens, as the jury for the EPUPS does, in light of Chapter 1.4.
[273] INT20091001.
[274] No documents were found, although muf's 2008 dossier for the Square is probably very close to what was submitted by the firm.
[275] Examples from this critique include Xavier Gonzales, *Espacios Colectivos: In Common 3*, A+T Special Issue, 2006; Alessandra Orlandoni, 'Interview with Liza Fior - Muf', *The Plan - Architecture and Technology in Details*, 2007, pp. 133–138; Claes Sörstedt, 'Muf Architecture/art', *Architectural Design: Theoretical Meltdown*, 79 (2009), 22–23.
[276] CCCB, 'Rules', p. 2.

prize, or more generally would be considered urban public space. This touches the nerve of Part II of the thesis which, in broad terms, starts by asking what, then, is public space?

At the onset, the above issues are developed within a framework where public space is an expanded field that questions the traditional dichotomy of public and private or the dominance of material aspects over urban concerns. The issues raised by looking at the chronotope of the EPUPS show uncertainty about the definition of public space in general, a blurring of public and private boundaries, a criticism of rigid typologies, and a tendency toward complexity and collaboration, paralleled by the continued belief in the collective and civic potential of the city.

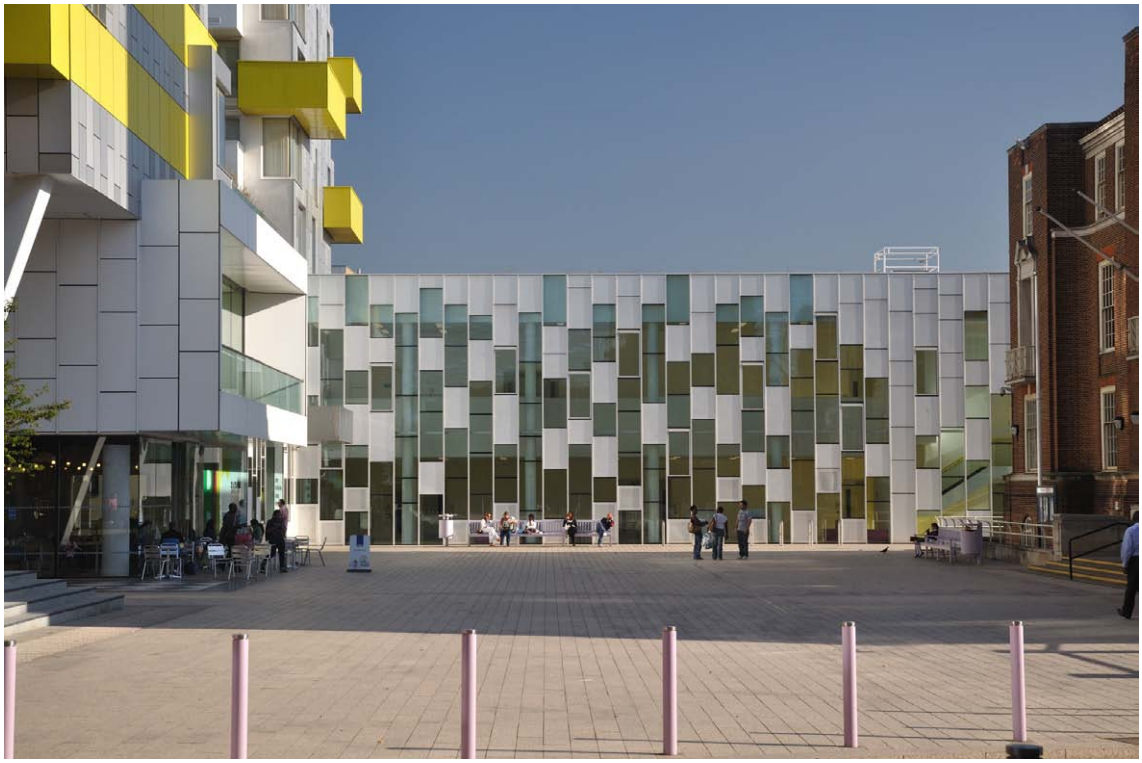
The Barking Town Square treads a fine line between these concerns. First of all, because the project for a town square raises the typological issue of a civic and municipal ideal which, even in its propensity to be wishful thinking, was embraced fully by the designers. The same project also appears to question the very principle of civic and public space upon which it is predicated. That is, the Town Square simultaneously expresses ideals and their subversion. Municipal vision in Barking, so criticised by the organisers of the EPUPS in other places, is the vision of having brought the complexity of the city to the steps of their own Town Hall. To have, in fact, constructed the contradictions, conflicts, differences and ambivalence characteristic of the contemporary public realm. This ambivalence, as we will now see in Chapter 7, is what ultimately ties Bakhtinian dialogism with the notion of public space.

Plate 29

Plaque commemorating the 2008 European Prize (before and after unveiling), September 2009.

Plate 30

Civic square area of Town Square, September 2009.



2.2 SPATIAL HETEROGLOSSIA

> There isn't one space, a beautiful space, a beautiful space round about, a beautiful space all around us, there's a whole of small bits of space, and one of these bits is a Métro corridor, and another of them is a public park. [...] In short, spaces have multiplied, been broken up and have diversified. There are spaces today of every kind and every size, for every use and every function.
>
> Georges Perec, *Species of Space*[277]

> There is no such thing as public space, just public spaces.
>
> Rowan Moore, 'Notes on Public Space'[278]

In 2010 the CCCB published a retrospective of the EPUPS entitled *In Favour of Public Space*. In an article aptly titled 'The Impossible Project of Public Space', Manuel de Solá-Morales, director of the 2008 edition, argues that any project of public space must be understood as a project of 'material urbanity', one where collective and political content is expressed in material form. These projects express civic, aesthetic, functional and social meanings that affect citizens who in turn can lay claim on these elements. It is no wonder, then, that after giving such a broad definition, De Solá-Morales ends up stating that all urban space 'is more or less public.'[279]

In the previous chapter we briefly saw how this vision, while still founded on an ideal view of the purpose of public space, is evoked in a context of uncertainty, of blurred boundaries between public and private realms, and of general complexity in relation to urban social and spatial phenomena. We also evoked how the Barking Town Square fitted in that context, bringing contradictions and ambivalence to the steps of the Town Hall. This chapter explores the 'impossible project' of public space, or, more to the point, the impossible project for a town square, by exploring the spatial qualities of the dialogic public realm developed in Part I. The chapter starts by developing some current debates on public space through empirical evidence before reworking them through Bakhtin's theory into a dialogical framework for public space.

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[277] Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (Penguin Classics, 1997), pp. 5–6.
[278] Moore, 'Notes on Public Space', p. 116.
[279] Manuel de Solá-Morales, 'The Impossible Project of Public Space', in *In Favour of Public Space: Ten Years of the European Prize for Urban Public Space*, ed. by Magda Angles (Barcelona: Actar, 2010), pp. 24–25.

IDEALS AND ANTI-IDEALS

Blurred boundaries

During my workshop with the Youth Forum I asked participating teenagers (average age 15) to give examples of public spaces in the Borough. Their list included The Vibe (a youth club), the Town Centre (Town Hall, library), golf ranges, parks, ice rinks, shopping malls, leisure centres and sports clubs. Without being prompted, they then engaged in a discussion about whether some of these spaces were indeed public or private, and what defined them as such, arguing whether ownership and paid access were criteria for public space. For some it did not matter that you had to pay, because it is meeting people that makes public space what it is. For others the line rested on government ownership; anything owned privately was private but could be opened temporarily to the public. At the end of the debate a few participants were giving intricate and subtle definitions, one in particular described the 'wavy line between public and private'.

The pattern repeated in my workshop with the Urban Design Forum[280] whose public space list included Barking Station, Vicarage Field shopping mall, public sculptures, parks, schools, health centres, cafés and the McDonald's restaurant on East Street. 'Public space', one participant commented, 'is everywhere the public is.' When I asked her who was the public, she answered: 'It's us, people.' Whether a space was publicly or privately owned, they thought, did not play a major role in determining whether it was indeed public space. Again, as with the Youth Forum and most of my interviewees, there was a tendency to accept, as a matter of fact, the blurred line between public and private.

This blurred boundary, however, is nothing trivial and is in fact one of the fundamental aspects of contemporary definitions of public space. In their respective studies of the public realm, for example, Jürgen Habermas, Hannah Arendt and Richard Sennett all recognise this phenomenon as a critical development of modern society, either by the promotion of private interests into common concerns, or by the privatisation of all aspects of life.[281] On the one hand, a blurred line between public and private supports critiques that deplore the increasing privatisation or decline of public space[282]—a critique usually predicated on ideals of public space (inclusive, democratic, collective, politically

[280] The Urban Design Forum is a group of residents (mostly professionals, average age 40) who have been specially trained to evaluate development proposals for the Borough.
[281] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere : an Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1962); Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, New Ed (Penguin, 2003).
[282] Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space* (New York, NY: Hill & Wang, 1992); Margaret Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* (Routledge, 2004); Setha M. Low and Neil Smith, *The Politics of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and Happiness in the Twenty-First-Century City* (Penguin Books, Limited, 2009).

relevant).[283] While on the other, the same blurred boundary paradoxically supports counter-critiques arguing that such ideals either never existed or are rendered irrelevant given a changing definition of public life.[284]

Relying on a precise separation between what might be deemed public and what might be deemed private thus leads to contradictions. The word public, then, has to be situated in a particular context to acquire any precision.[285] In his study of the public/private dichotomy, Jeff Weintraub identifies four distinct uses that are based on different premises leading to different conceptions of the public realm.[286] One overarching paradox he identifies is that the economic market can be seen as part of the private realm as well as the public realm. In the end, Weintraub recognises that it is indeed impossible to join these contradictory uses under a single 'grand dichotomy' but that the distinction is nevertheless useful if only because its terms of reference, public and private, inevitably imply meaning and our society is structured along these paradoxes.[287]

Defining public space raises similar issues, where the reliance on a precise division between public and private can only be contextual and partially accurate. In addition, as is noted by Weintraub, public space is further problematized given the fact that the city is both the object of study and the metaphorical source of many of the key concepts of Western social thought and political theory.[288] Calling the Barking Town Square a 'freely accessible and pedestrianised public forum'[289] calls forth a particular conception of public

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[283] For a general review of the literature see Matthew Carmona, 'Contemporary Public Space: Critique and Classification, Part One: Critique', *Journal of Urban Design*, 15 (2010), 123–148.

[284] Stephen Carr and others, *Public Space*, Cambridge Series in Environment and Behavior (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Maarten A. Hajer and Arnold Reijndorp, *In Search of New Public Domain: Analysis and Strategy* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2001); again, for a general review of the literature, see Matthew Carmona, 'Contemporary Public Space, Part Two: Classification', *Journal of Urban Design*, 15 (2010), 157–173.

[285] For example Habermas' original *Öffentlichkeit* is translated into 'public sphere' in English and Dutch. Italian and Spanish translations use 'public opinion', and in French it is translated as *l'espace public*—clearly creating confusion between concepts that may be taken as distinct from each other depending on the reader. See Clément Orillard, 'Repenser « l'espace public » à travers l'histoire', *Labyrinthe*, La Biopolitique (d')après Michel Foucault, 22 (2005), 141–145.

[286] Jeff Weintraub, 'The Public/Private Distinction', in *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*, ed. by Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar (London: University of Chicago Press, 1997). These are based on different understandings of the public and private distinction. The liberal-economistic model sees the market as private and state administration as public. The republican-virtue model sees both the market and state administration as private while the political community and citizens constitute the public. This is the model supported by Hannah Arendt, for example, in *The Human Condition*. The third model is to see the public realm as the sphere of polymorphous and fluid sociability (as in Jane Jacobs' *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*). And finally the general feminist approach of identifying the realm of the family as private and the rest as public. These four models are further expanded, Weintraub notes, by two overarching contradictory views on the dichotomy. The first takes the market as being inherently private because it is distinct from the public realm of state administration and politics. The second takes the market as being public since it is other than our individual privacy and clearly not private in relation to an individual's body and intimacy.

[287] Weintraub, p. 37.

[288] Weintraub, p. 26.

[289] Murray Fraser, 'Global Architectural Influences on London', *Architectural Design: London (Re)Generation*, 82 (2012), 14–21.

space that ties the project with an archetype of Western urban and political form rather than its immediate context. This immediate context, as will be extensively developed in Chapter 8, makes the 'publicness' of the Town Square dependent on a number of factors including the time of day, library opening hours, weather, bylaws, civic order, commercial activities, inter-subjective relationships and more. In this sense, the public space of the Town Square relates to what Margaret Kohn describes as a 'cluster concept', one whose definition is multiple and sometimes contradictory and captures the public-private hybridity of social space.[290] At Town Square or, as we saw, in my workshops' participants' general understanding of public space, the boundary between public and private is similarly blurred in a spatial rendering of social phenomena that are paradoxically one and the other. Whether described as 'social space'[291], 'soft edges'[292], 'third places'[293], 'loose space'[294] or, indeed, a 'wavy line', we will see, later on, how this structuring paradox becomes increasingly relevant in a dialogic understanding of public space.

Definitions ad nauseam

Because of blurred boundaries and the paradoxical meanings attributed to the words public and private, public space eludes, perhaps like no other design problem, strict classification and typology.[295] Attempts at classifying public spaces according to types usually produce longer lists fated to be edited in the future as the landmark studies of Camillo Sitte, Paul Zucker and Stephen Carr have shown.[296] Carr writes: 'As public life evolves with the culture, new types of spaces may be needed and old ones discarded or revived.'[297] Festival squares, fair grounds, corporate plazas and shopping malls, are all examples of these new forms that complement and replace the old archetypes. Definitions, in other words, have to be expanded and adjusted to new publics.

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[290] Kohn, p. 11.
[291] As Jeff Weintraub notes, what Hannah Arendt is capturing with the introduction of the social realm is the appearance of a realm that is neither public nor private in the traditional (Aristotelian) sense, something unprecedented, and therefore requiring a tripartite model. Weintraub, p. 37. Kohn's suggestion of social space is, to my mind, the spatial equivalent of Arendt's proposition.
[292] Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings: Using Public Space* (Danish Architectural Press, 2008).
[293] Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Community Centers, Beauty Parlors, General Stores, Bars, Hangouts, and How They Get You through the Day* (Paragon House, 1989).
[294] Karen A. Franck and Quentin Stevens, *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life* (Routledge, 2007).
[295] *Spaced Out*, the 2005 review of prize winning public space projects in the UK, is a specific example of this struggle. The review includes thirty-one projects. Out of these it presents ten 'squares' that are further qualified as historical, modern, contemporary, civic, town or urban without any of these expressions being defined by the editors. The relative public merit of a particular type is left to the judgement of the reader according to their own particular understanding of public space. Nicola Garmory and Rachel Tennant, *Spaced Out: a Comprehensive Guide to Award Winning Spaces in the UK* (Architectural Press, 2005).
[296] Camillo Sitte, *The Art of Building Cities: City Building According to Its Artistic Fundamentals* (Hyperion Press, 1979); Paul Zucker, *Town and Square : from the Agora to the Village Green* (Columbia U.P.; Oxford U.P, 1959); Carr and others.
[297] Carr and others, p. xi.

The problem with classification and typology, however, is that they eventually fail to grasp the complexity of public space. We can look at this issue more closely by analysing a recent study by Matthew Carmona. Its basic argument, with regards to classification, is that regardless of whether it is done from a design perspective (as in the above examples of Sitte, Zucker and Carr), a political-economy perspective or a socio-cultural perspective, the result is the same: classification tends to produce an infinite complexity of types.[298] As a possible solution, Carmona emphasises the tendency to move away from rigid classification toward more flexible evaluation criteria. He uses the example of Kohn's three-part model based on ownership, accessibility and intersubjectivity[299] and suggests adding management as a fourth. This allows him to qualify particular spaces according to a sliding scale from 'clearly public to clearly private space' yet while problematically still suggesting loose categories: positive, negative, ambiguous and private spaces.[300] Although Carmona's classification of 'urban spaces'[301] follows the idea of social space oscillating between the truly public and the truly private, it also begs the question of whether categorisation is inevitable even when dealing with flexible criteria since at any point we might be fixing variables to understand a place according to a particular social concept, time or value—let alone the continued reliance on two poles defined by the uncertain and problematic expressions public and private. Another issue is that no set of criteria could be exhaustive. How is Carmona's criterion of subjective perception affected, for example, if perception and experience are taken to be inter-subjective to start with? Moreover, the places being evaluated as well as the evaluation criteria are not only social constructs, but constructs constrained by time. These two criteria in themselves offer a widely oscillating perspective on public space.

Attributing a specific type to a place is trying to fix something that cannot be fixed. It fixes meaning when this one will change with the use of the place, its management, the connections it fosters, its perception in the local community, and with time. The expression 'town square', for example, attributed early on to the project for a public space in front of Barking Town Hall, has invited a constant debate between the projection of civic ideals (Nazeem Ullah (director of the BLC) and Peter Bishop (LDA), for example, were forceful about their support of citizenship through the Town Square) and the reality of social life in the Town Centre (see Chapters 8 and 9). The recognition of perception, subjectivity, ownership and management as criteria for understanding urban space questions the simple

[298] Carmona, 'Contemporary Public Space, Part Two', p. 166. In the socio-cultural perspective Carmona mentions Wallin, Burgers, Hall, and Dines and Cattell. In the political-economy he mentions Gulick, Kilian, Malone and Flusty.
[299] Kohn, pp. 11–12.
[300] Carmona, 'Contemporary Public Space, Part Two', p. 169.
[301] See Table 1 in Carmona, 'Contemporary Public Space, Part Two', p. 169.

dichotomy between public and private and suggests that public space has much more to do with experience and use rather than regular forms or archetypes like squares and streets. As we will now see, it further questions public space as a physical place and mixes its definition with socio-cultural, financial and political issues. Although flexible criteria (over typologies) are not with their own problems, they indeed seem like the best approach to the problem of defining public space as both a social and physical construct.

The urban field

During my workshop with Council representatives, I asked participants to complete the sentence 'The public realm is the place where—'. Their collected answers included:

> The public realm is the place where people have to be careful what they say.
>
> The public realm is the place where I had to work over the weekend.
>
> The public realm is the place where you can feel free.
>
> The public realm is the place where you can go share your thoughts, ideas, talents, etc.
>
> The public realm is the place where you can be yourself.
>
> The public realm is the place where you can inspire others with positive messages.
>
> The public realm is the place where local communities connect to as their place of residence.
>
> The public realm is a collection of themed public spaces and things.
>
> The public realm is a Council's open space portfolio.
>
> The public realm is the place where public life happens.
>
> The public realm is the place where interesting things can take place.
>
> The public realm is the place where people interact with each other and their environment.
>
> The public realm is the place where you can expect the unexpected.

While most answers imply a physical public realm as a particular location (this is partly due to the question itself), they also imply cross-overs between physical and social aspects of the public realm: public life, meeting strangers, crowds, speech, etc. In workshops and interviews, the expression public realm rarely referred to an abstract public sphere of political and social interactions isolated from the physical world; and rarely did it imply public space existing beyond and apart from public and social life. In some instances, the expression was used multiple times to describe various concepts. For example, during the

course of a single conversation with Paul Monaghan, 'public realm' was used to describe three different things: the freely accessible built environment ('…The more you put on the site, the more you could pay for the public realm…'), the realm of information accessible to any UK citizen ('…Every planning application has to be put into the public realm…'), and the space of social interaction (including circulation of bodies and intersecting areas of activity):

> The principles of the public realm are the same as we came up with originally. Routes here, big space here, big space there, something tall there, library and police station here, and allowing things to knit through.[302]

The following quote from the same interview appears to fuse or confound previous uses:

> As an architect your duty is to your client and to the city, or to the world, and I think our duty was bound between getting Redrow what they wanted and also the city and town. In a way it shows the use private money to build the public realm.[303]

This type of ambiguous expression, implying both physical and social elements, can also be read from muf's own description of their work 'in the public realm':

> We came together through ties of friendship and shared interests in the possibilities of the public realm as a relief from the social, cultural and political environment of 1994.[304]

And again:

> If democracy requires that we each have an equal relationship to one another, then the only place where we remain sufficiently free of definitions, unlike home or work, is the public realm.[305]

Although these statements explicitly separate the domestic, professional and public realms, they also express the idea that working on public space projects implies making propositions about the organisation of society. More explicitly, muf state that they strive to 'realize the potential pleasures that exist at the intersection between the lived and the built.'[306]

The relationship, raised in my research, between spatial and social aspects of public space here requires to be framed appropriately. As we saw from the debate on classification and definition, criteria that go beyond the physical properties of place are brought to bear on how we conceive public space. It is no longer appropriate to understand public space as

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[302] INT20100507.
[303] INT20100507.
[304] Muf, p. 8.
[305] Muf, p. 28.
[306] Muf architecture/art, 'Profile', *muf architecture/art*, 2009 <http://www.muf.co.uk/mprofile.html> [accessed 23 November 2009].

a purely physical aspect of cities, a given stage for the enactment of human interaction.[307] Nor is it appropriate to extend a set of typological locations and settings to support new aspects of social life.[308] Rather, public space has to be understood as both physical and social.[309] Two particular aspects of this shift have to be elaborated on here: the idea of public space as a social production; and two, the reciprocity between human and non-human aspects of public space.

Henri Lefebvre wrote in *The Urban Revolution* that all urban structures are both morphological and sociological: squares, streets, buildings, locations, and age groups, gender, economic classes, etc.[310] Urban space and its political organisation, Lefebvre comes to argue, express social relationships but also react back upon them.[311] This is the principle of a socio-spatial dialectic that Lefebvre further develops in *The Production of Space*. Dividing social (real) space from mathematical (ideal) space is a mistake according to him since they both involve, underpin and pre-suppose each other.[312] Edward Soja writes: 'Space in itself may be primordially given, but the organization, and meaning of space is a product of social translation, transformation, and experience.'[313] That is, for Lefebvre, space is always produced rather than given[314] and never reducible to a thing in itself.[315] Two major consequences of this paradigm have significant bearing on the notion of public space. They are that every society and every mode of production produces their own space[316], and that the object of interest in the study of space must 'shift from *things in space* to the actual *production of space*.'[317]

Nor can public space be conceived without addressing theoretical models for which human and non-human aspects have reciprocity and share agency. Ignacio Farías puts forward that the city should be conceived as an enactment of sociomaterial and sociotechnical 'ensembles' or 'assemblages': the city is 'brought into being and made

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[307] Mike Crang and N. J. Thrift, *Thinking Space*, Critical Geographies (London: Routledge, 2000). They write that space has to be understood as process rather than a given abstract category (p. 3).
[308] Hajer and Reijdorp write that thinking about public space at the turn of the millennium is determined by the intuitive notion that public space must be specifically located: a square, a café, a park. For them, the pervasiveness of this notion means that new and different manifestations of the public sphere are at best overlooked and at worst ruled out of being public at all. Hajer and Reijndorp, p. 16; also de Solá-Morales.
[309] Ash Amin, 'Collective Culture and Urban Public Space', *City*, 12 (2008), 5–24 <doi:10.1080/13604810801933495>; Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005); Susana Torre, 'Claiming the Public Space: The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo', in *The Sex of Architecture*, ed. by Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, and Leslie Weisman (New York: Harry N. Abrahams, 1996).
[310] Henri Lefebvre, *La Révolution Urbaine*, Collection Idées (Gallimard, 1970), p. 156.
[311] Lefebvre, *La Révolution Urbaine*, p. 25.
[312] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 14.
[313] Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), pp. 79–80.
[314] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 15.
[315] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 27.
[316] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 31.
[317] Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, p. 37.

present in ensembles of heterogeneous actors, material and social aspects.'[318] Ash Amin argues the same more specifically about public space saying that the concept should include the total dynamic, human and non-human, of a public setting.[319] Seeing public space as an enactment or a performance suggests that 'there is no archetypal public space, only variegated space-times of aggregation.'[320]

In relation to these two major conceptual ideas about urban space, a public space like Barking Town Square should be understood as a product specific to its context and a particular culture and political organisation, as a particular enactment or assemblage in space and time, a produced space or a process rather than an architectural thing. The meaning we attribute to the Town Square, or to any other place, is then attributed to its production resulting from the dialectical relationship between objects and social practices. This is an important step in developing the background for a dialogical theory of public space because it sets up a question about the relationship between space and dialogue. The following section starts to explore this issue by putting two examples from my fieldwork in relation that highlight the play between various productions of the Town Square.

Authority and experience

I am sitting in LTGDC CEO Peter Andrews' corner office at Wyndham House, Canary Wharf, overlooking the basin stretching south. Discussing the Town Square, Andrews first identifies the project as a product in relation to his organisation:

> We also contributed to the pink granite... to provide quality public realm which also enabled them to deliver the kind of arboretum in the centre and we also contributed to the... hum... the wall. [...] We were keen that we delivered a high quality product there.[321]

He continues giving sense to the place in the context of the LTGDC's 'carving up' of space in East London when discussing large scale and long term policy for the entire area of London Riverside. In an 'open world city' (his expression) 'it should be a free flow of labour, and labour should go to those places where it's most productive.'[322] The competitive edge in productivity, for the LBBD area, is rail logistics for Dagenham and creative industries for Barking.

> [In Barking] space is simply cheap enough for those pioneers or the sharp end if you like of the creative communities to start to migrate to,

[318] Ignacio Farías, 'Decentring the Object of Urban Studies', in *Urban Assemblages: How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies*, ed. by Thomas Bender and Ignacio Farías, 1st edn (Routledge, 2009), pp. 1–24 (p. 14).
[319] Amin, p. 8.
[320] Amin, p. 9.
[321] INT20100726.
[322] INT20100726.

> and then on the back of that is creating some sort of culture, ethos, character, vibrancy that attracts other people there so you start to get a critical mass…the way you get agglomeration economies. So I think you've seen that: the move from Soho to Shoreditch now, perhaps to come to Hackney Wick, perhaps to try to promote that a bit in Barking and try…to change people's aspiration and change the dynamics of the area a bit.[323]

From the large scale of UK development policies to the small scale of events on the Square, decisions and practices are giving meaning to the place. A video shot from the Lemonade building during the 2011 London riots shows a group of about thirty looters regrouping in the arboretum having been chased by police on Ripple Road before charging and pushing back police officers to Blake's Corner.[324] Giving meaning to this event seems inseparable from evaluating the relationship between the 'quality product' of the Town Square, central government aspirations, recently moved in residents of Barking Central, and the violence unfolding at the foot of the tower.

The various scales at which space is produced illustrate once more the complexity of any attempt at classifying public spaces. Dividing between design, socio-political, liberal-economist and other categories only leads to a fragmentary understanding of public space at any given time. At any moment it should be possible to understand public space as a momentary production whose design, social, political, cultural, or financial aspects overlap definitive boundaries. Ideal projections of public space, as in Peter Andrews conception of the Town Square and Barking above, are thus constantly challenged or affirmed by use and experience. Drawing an analogy with the socio-spatial dialectic, it is possible to say that ideal public space and real (lived) public space involve, underpin and pre-suppose each other; they both express and affect each other in turn. The meaning of any public space, then, is worked at in the problematic relationship between authority and experience, and between ideals and their counterparts.[325] Or, as we will now see, public space is given meaning dialogically.

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[323] INT20100726.

[324] *Riot in Barking*, 2011 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TOJoEIqNifc&feature=youtube_gdata_player> [accessed 10 August 2011].

[325] Hence in some of the most prominent examples that work within socio-spatial frameworks, public space has to be found, appropriated, reclaimed, converted or created against the spatial logic of a particular authority. The work of the Internationale Situationiste and the legacy of psychogeography, developed in parallel to Lefebvre's work on the urban, the socio-spatial dialectic and the revolutionary potential of everyday life are quite telling on this point. Also significant are Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16 (1986), 22–27 <doi:10.2307/464648>; Michiel Dehaene and Lieven de Cauter, eds., *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Postcivil Society* (Routledge, 2008); Kenny Cupers and Markus Miessen, *Spaces of Uncertainty* (Müller und Busmann, 2002); and Stalker, 'Stalker - Laboratorio D'arte Urbana - Roma', *Stalker - laboratorio d'arte urbana - Roma* <http://www.stalkerlab.org> [accessed 8 August 2011].

DIALOGICAL PUBLIC SPACE

The Barking examples given up to now express confusion about the notion of public space and the public realm, blurred boundaries and reciprocity between social and physical aspects. In my experience, the confusion appears in the use of these expressions generally (their use for different purposes, they can mean both this and that) rather than in their specific use. In speech I rarely found there was confusion as to the intended meaning of the expression. Speakers moved between talking about physical, social and political elements depending on the dynamics of the conversation. The point is that this does not mark a confusion as to what the expression actually means, but rather the broadness of the concept itself whose signification changes according to its use, the context of its use and the dialogic identities of the interlocutors. That is, the use of concepts like public space or public realm have to be placed in the context of dialogue. In my interviews as well as in documents, my understanding was that the person knew what they meant when they used this expression instead of another. Public realm makes sense in the context in which it is used for Paul Monaghan and AHMM or Liza Fior and muf. In the case of muf, for example, what is interesting to note is that, in interviews, the partners never present a cogent portrait of the public realm with which they work with. Asking for a definition of public space, or the public, produces varying answers which indicates their definition is not so significant as to be fixed (as a sort of manifesto). During one interview, for example, after having exchanged a few comments about the 'openness' of public space, Liza Fior quickly jotted down her answer—generated in conversation—in order to save it for later. In this case, and as I support in this chapter, the definition of public space or the public realm is worked at and derived from a process rather than being fully predetermined.

Ken Hirschkop supports that the relevance of the Bakhtinian critique of the public realm lies in the mid-twentieth-century shift from conceiving public space as 'a space in which a certain kind of communication could take place' to a 'space generated by a certain kind of communication.'[326] That is, the discursive model of the public realm, as described in Chapter 4, supports the idea that public space is generated by dialogue (diverse discourses, languages, linguistic spaces, meanings) rather than being a given setting for dialogue. The goal of this section is to build from the previous and develop an understanding of public space based on the idea that the relationship between dialogue and space is equivalent to the relationship between social practices and space. At the same time, it constructs a framework for dialogical public space through which the Town Square will then be

[326] Ken Hirschkop, 'Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas', in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. by Nick Crossley and John M. Roberts (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 49–66 (p. 51).

evaluated in Chapters 8 and 9. In this case, dialogue has to be developed as a concept that describes social, cultural and political relationships located in and producing space. Two seminal papers mark the development of a dialogical (Bakhtinian) conception of space. The first, by Mireya Folch-Serra, explores landscape as something constituted of multiple voices with ideological character.[327] The second, by Julian Holloway and James Kneale, describes the spatial qualities of all Bakhtinian concepts, from self/other relations to the chronotope.[328] My suggestion is to use these two papers as a basis to develop the notion of dialogical public space. At the onset, this notion means that any conception of public space is a non-neutral and ideological conception marked by polyphony and heteroglossia, and, that the spatiality of the concept encompasses the many scales at which public space is produced, enacted or performed.

Spatial dialogics

The relevance of Bakhtin's concepts may be less in their most overt connections to public space through the medieval public square of Rabelais and the carnival, and more in the inherent spatiality of all his concepts. This, in fact, is the crux of Folch-Serra's and Holloway and Kneale's conception of dialogic space. For Holloway and Kneale, this spatiality is characterised by two differing conceptions of context: one material and phenomenological, and the other social.[329] As we saw in Part I, the relationship between self and other constitutes the basis of Bakhtin's thought on subjectivity and identity. Furthermore, this relationship is always spatial because it is predicated on the non-repeatability of being as an event and the uniqueness of each person's location in space and time. What Bakhtin emphasises (especially in his reading of Einstein) is the importance of the particular place from which observations are made. As Folch-Serra writes: 'this position in a "place" determines the meaning of what is observed.'[330] So the positional relationship between one and the other is what determines the meaning of an observation. The same applies to utterances (Bakhtin's word for a deed) which are situated and shaped by relationships to other utterances. 'The work of signification or meaning', Holloway and Kneale report, '*always* occurs as part of a *dialogue* between (at least) two utterances.'[331] As was mentioned before, meaning is worked at rather than given. The important point to make here is that 'space matters because the outcome of a dialogue depends on *where* it is

[327] Folch-Serra.
[328] Holloway and Kneale.
[329] Holloway and Kneale, p. 71.
[330] Folch-Serra, p. 266.
[331] Holloway and Kneale, p. 76.

stated.'[332] The meaning of a particular utterance depends on the position of the person standing in front of me, sitting behind a desk, upon a stage—always outside myself—and its relation to other utterances in the dialogue and their respective position.

This immediate spatial context (material and phenomenological) is contrasted by a second, social conception of context. The utterance, apart from being constitutive of immediate dialogue, is located in the 'context of social time and space'.[333] Folch-Serra writes that 'everyday language is a communicative act' because it communicates social dialects and contextual positions.[334] Holloway and Kneale similarly suggest that any utterance given by a speaker expresses a particular world-view, social interest or positionality through its particular speech genre. The diversity of these speech genres, in competition or in conflict, is heteroglossia. Hence they come to define *position* as 'the placing of the speaker in an ideological terrain.'[335] So the meaning of the utterance also depends on its position *vis-à-vis* a wider social context given by particular speech genres (for example, Margaret Hodge's second ceremony speech given from the stage of the Town Square, or a conversation punctuated by slang overheard at Blake's Corner). Each speech genre, as we will see below, presupposes and produces a particular space.

Here Holloway and Kneale identify the gap between the material/phenomenological and social conceptions of context in Bakhtin's work. They quote from Hirschkop:

> We are thus confronted with an awkward analytical choice: do we define context as the immediate material situation…or do we define it as heteroglossia, a more spacious conception, but one which restricts the context to the stuff of language?[336]

Holloway and Kneale argue that this gap is resolved in understanding social context as the third element between self and other. That is, what they argue for is exactly the double-movement between heteroglossia and unitary language, where each one affects and is affected by the other. As Folch-Serra writes: 'dialogue takes places between the centrifugal forces of subjectivity, which are chaotic and particular, and the centripetal forces of system,

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[332] Folch-Serra, p. 266.
[333] Holloway and Kneale, p. 77. For Bakhtin it is the utterance (*la parole*) that should be the foundation of linguistics. That is, the most subjective, dialogic element of language is seen as its most constitutive. This is quite opposite to Saussure's ideas for whom the utterance is the most unreliable element of language. We should remember here that language, for Bakhtin, is fundamentally social. The utterance, then, as a carrier of meaning, is seen as the communicative element between a speaker and a listener, between one and an other. See also Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres'.
[334] Folch-Serra, p. 260. Folch-Serra identifies the various social dialects derived from parents, clan, class, religion, country, region, gender, race, generation and locale as a metaphor of polyphony.
[335] Holloway and Kneale, p. 77.
[336] Ken Hirschkop, 'Introduction: Bakhtin and Cultural Theory', in *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 16.

which are rule-driven and abstract.'[337] This ambivalence of dialogue between centripetal forces and centrifugal forces is what bridges the gap between social context and phenomenological context. Hence Holloway and Kneale can argue that heteroglossia is spatial because it acts on the (spatial) relationship between concrete speakers. They thus conclude that 'the social terrain of heteroglossia can be argued to be a *socio-spatial* landscape… If speech genres carve up the social then they can also be seen to carve up space.'[338]

Dialogue, then, produces space; and dialogue, as an analytical tool, can in turn uncover the particular production of this space and uncover what Folch-Serra calls the ideological aspects of landscape. As he writes: 'Bakhtin's view of all cultural production being rooted in language has the effect of breaking down the walls between text and context.'[339] That is, the boundary between understanding landscape and dialogue about landscape is significantly blurred when we understand that each presupposes and underpins the other. Conceiving of landscape as a 'repository of heteroglossia', Folch-Serra sums up:

> [The Bakhtinian conceptual landscape] strives at ongoing historical developments that alternately 'anchor' and destabilize the 'natural harmony' of a given region through constant interaction between meanings. These meanings are spawned, of course, by conversation. A dialogical landscape indicates the historical moment and situation (time and space) of a dialogue whose outcome is never a neutral exchange. Landscape becomes not only 'graphically visible' in space but also 'narratively visible' in time, in a field of discourses all attempting to account for human experience. Neutrality, therefore, becomes an impossibility.[340]

The main analytical tool that supports this statement is the chronotope whose spatial implication is perhaps the clearest of all Bakhtinian concepts. The chronotope is based on the relationship between space and time as defined in Bakhtin's relativist view of space (difference is given by the simultaneity of various points of view). What the chronotope allows is to momentarily fix the dialogical landscape so that it may be understood as a series of space-time situations (events) on which stabilising and destabilising forces are acting. In other words, the chronotope is a 'means for materializing time in space.'[341] Chronotopes are characteristic of particular speech genres whose relationships to space and time are intertwined with their own ideological positions. So the wider social context of a

[337] Folch-Serra, p. 261.
[338] Holloway and Kneale, p. 79.
[339] Folch-Serra, p. 261.
[340] Folch-Serra, p. 258.
[341] Folch-Serra, p. 263.

particular space (its production) takes on 'flesh and blood' in the chronotope.[342] For Folch-Serra, this means that to investigate dialogical landscapes through the chronotopes always leads to the human voice. 'When we recognize different chronotopes in the make up of landscapes, we also recognize the biases, ethnocentricity, and limitations of certain discourses.'[343] Reading time into space, either the space of self/other relations, the space of social relations, or the socio-spatial landscape of heteroglossia, thus uncovers the particular positions (ideologies) of a dialogue that is 'never a neutral exchange.'

Public square aesthetics

> The people swarmed the public square
> And pointed laughingly at me,
> And I was filled with shame and fear.

Bakhtin quotes these lines of Pushkin's *Boris Godunov* at the end of *Rabelais and his World* thus encompassing the relationship between the concept of dialogue and its social performance. In other words, expressing the relationship between dialogue and public space. This relationship is one of ambivalence between fear and laughter and between authority and its challenge. Publicly enacted in space, this ambivalence takes the form of *carnival*.[344] For Bakhtin it was the grotesque body of the middle-ages (read in the pages of Rabelais) that embodied this ambivalence as opposed to the mathematical and ideal body of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. As Holloway and Kneale note, this conception of the body was closer to 'the body of the people' for Bakhtin than any other and in more than one sense. The general reality of bodies, gross, deformed, smelly, loud and subjectively incomplete was metaphorically represented in carnival as the other side of official culture.[345] That is, social relations and their subversion were acted out in the space of carnival.

What Bakhtin draws from medieval carnival is 'the inversion of power structures, the parodic debunking of all that a particular society takes seriously (including and in particular all that which if fears).'[346] *Carnival laughter* and folk humour then become paramount in de-stabilising the 'seriousness' of power structures.[347] Laughter, parody, the

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[342] M. M. Bakhtin, 'Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes Toward a Historical Poetics', in *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. by Michael Holquist, University of Texas Press Slavic Series No. 1 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 250.
[343] Folch-Serra, p. 263. Folch-Serra creates a link between the chronotope and David Harvey's concept of 'distinctive bundle of time and space'. See Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989) p. 204.
[344] Renate Lachmann, Raoul Eshelman and Marc Davis, 'Bakhtin and Carnival: Culture as Counter-Culture', *Cultural Critique*, 11 (1988), 115–152 <doi:10.2307/1354246>.
[345] Holloway and Kneale, p. 80.
[346] Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev, p. 250.
[347] Dragan Kujundzic, 'Laughter as Otherness in Bakhtin and Derrida', in *Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, 4 vols. (London: SAGE, 2002), IV.

inversion and subversion of official culture introduce an ambivalence of boundaries and categories. In a more general definition, Michael Gardiner notes that the *carnivalesque* draws

> our attention to the underlying sociocultural forces that continually subvert our received commonsensical notions and habitualized viewpoints, and to encourage a renewed awareness of the hidden and all-too-often suppressed potentialities that lie within 'the dregs of an everyday gross reality.'[348]

What Bakhtin observes through Rabelais is heteroglossia and its various stabilising and de-stabilising forces. Dominick LaCapra emphasises that it is on the public square that Bakhtin observes this drama taking place, where carnival is enacted, where bodies encounter each other in their gross reality, and where languages (tones and speech genres) come together dialogically. LaCapra writes:

> The public square brings what is marginal or borderline in ordinary life to the very center of the community. On it all ordinary opposites meet and intermingle, and in this zone of festive familiarity, there are no footlights to separate spectators from participants.[349]

The main features of carnival, 'ambivalence, laughter, and parody—are expressed in the space of the public square, where its participants *live* the reverse side of the world.'[350] As Ken Hirschkop infers, the public square is the 'institutional name for heteroglossia.' In other words, public space is spatialised heteroglossia. Holloway and Kneale emphasise the relationship between space and speech genres by noting that the space of carnival is more than metaphorical; what Bakhtin identified as the language of the public square and the marketplace (translated as Billingsgate) is 'both an important speech genre located in (and producing) a specific social space and a dialogical answer to the monologue of the elite.'[351] Every utterance, every speech genre has a similar potential to carnivalise language, that is, to destabilise official culture. Also, every speech genre is potentially 'carving up' or producing its own space. A particular speech genre (Billingsgate) is reconceived as a spatial performance of social relations that takes place in a particular space (the marketplace). Both speech genre and space are mutually constitutive. Holloway and Kneale write:

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[348] Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', p. 42. As a warning, though, Lutz Koepnick notes that while Bakhtin's carnival has been accepted by scholars as a liberating and counteracting force other negative modes of carnival are possible. He notes that Walter Benjamin observed that in fascism, carnivalesque practices are co-opted as a 'tool of pseudo-emancipation' to stabilise authoritarian rule. The fascist spectacle 'utilizes the subversive moment of the popular dimension; it transposes carnival's power of transitory displacement, reversal, and cathartic outlet into a project of synchronization and national renewal.' Lutz P. Koepnick, *Walter Benjamin and the Aesthetics of Power* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1999), p. 70.
[349] Dominick LaCapra, 'Bakhtin, Marxism, and the Carnivalesque', in *Mikhail Bakhtin*, ed. by Michael Gardiner, 4 vols. (London: SAGE, 2003), II, 35–59 (p. 41).
[350] Folch-Serra, p. 265.
[351] Holloway and Kneale, pp. 80–81.

> Once we have reconceived Billingsgate as the performance of spatialised social relations (including linguistic ones) we can see that space and speech genre can be mutually constitutive. The speech performances of Billingsgate draw upon the dialogical social relations of the marketplace. As in the novel, this speech genre has the potential to rewrite language and social space; it represents a centrifugal opposition to the centripetal, ordering attempts of monologues. As a result, we should not be looking for temporary or liminal inversions of hierarchies, but the ways that Carnival constantly attempts to undermine these monologues in all spaces.[352]

Carnival, as it turns out, is the other of everyday life but not its antithesis. Each is steeped into the other and they cannot be divorced from each other.[353] In other words, the same ideological undertones and power struggles that the carnival makes apparent in the balance between monologue and heterology are similarly present in everyday life. So while the carnival might seemingly be inappropriate in certain cases where socio-political authority is not reversed or openly parodied, we can nevertheless look at these through the lens of everyday life and arrive at similar conclusions. Every utterance, every action performed in the everyday implies a potential and relative carnivalisation of official culture that is located and producing a particular space—for example, Liza Fior's concern, which we will explore in detail in Chapter 9, for empty bottles thrown into the arboretum's planted areas.

The word potential is crucial here because we again run into the issue, raised by Hirschkop (see Chapter 5), that we cannot grant that every speech genre, every action has ideological content, consciously or not, in relation to public space.[354] Bakhtin's view of the public square is an idealised version of heteroglossia where individuals come together to speak and act as such without being abstracted into citizens or publics, or having to shed all 'differentiating identity'.[355] What we may grant is that the relationship between ideal public space, heteroglossia and individual actions is one that is characterised by varying social and individual contexts. As we saw in Chapter 4, emphasis has to be put on the act and how this one is positioned (and understood to be) between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Once we conceive of public space we are indeed giving value to these relationships or these particular actions, this particular space—which is an ideological terrain. This is why *spatial heteroglossia*, or what I suggest calling my dialogical framework for public space, has to be conceived first and foremost as a framework for understanding, rather than representing, public space. Otherwise, dialogue and heteroglossia are reified into ideals and the potential of dialogical public space is lost.

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[352] Holloway and Kneale, p. 81.
[353] Gardiner, *Critiques of Everyday Life*, p. 65.
[354] The same is argued by Amin in 'Collective Culture and Urban Public Space' who argues that action in public space is pre-cognitive and therefore relatively free of a wider social context.
[355] Hirschkop, II, p. 179.

ANYTHING BUT A NEUTRAL FIELD

As seen in the first section of this chapter, understanding the urban field as a social and spatial phenomenon unfettered by strict boundaries and definitions means, as is here noted by Farías, that

> space, scale and time are […] multiply enacted and assembled at concrete local sites, where concrete actors shape time-space dynamics in various ways, producing thereby different geographies of associations.[356]

In this framework, public spaces are 'aggregations of space and time'[357] characterised by the various practices of actors and social relationship between them. Now consider the following conception of space, written by Holloway and Kneale but derived from Folch-Serra, in comparison to the one just given:

> Space is constructed by the constant dialogical interaction of a multiplicity of voices; at any point in space and time it is possible to see a chronotope which is more or less fixed depending upon the strength of competing centripetal (monological) and centrifugal (dialogical) forces.[358]

There is significant overlap and resonance between the two conceptions. Both acknowledge that space is essentially produced, not given, and that we are dealing with a fluid conception of space without strict categories and typologies. Two crucial differences though need to be pointed out. The first is the way production is conceptualised; between concrete actors shaping space-time dynamics or voices interacting dialogically. The dialogical conception emphasises interaction and dialogical ambivalence so that space cannot be understood outside of an encounter between two or more consciousnesses. The 'construction of space' presupposes alterity. The second difference is in the way 'geographies of associations' are problematised. The dialogical conception concedes that all production of space is fraught, caught between competing monological and dialogical forces. While in the first (Actor Network Theory/assemblage) conception the relationship between authority and everyday life is passively acknowledged in 'different geographies', in the second (dialogical) conception this relationship is fully acknowledged and they are allowed to co-exist and compete. As Holloway and Kneale further write, this conception 'does not privilege discourses or fix representations, but instead, depends upon a recognition of their relative weight in dialogue.'[359] What matters is one, the other, and the dialogical relationship between them, so that it may always be possible to read power, authority and their challenge in space.

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[356] Farías, p. 6.
[357] Amin, p. 9.
[358] Holloway and Kneale, p. 82.
[359] Holloway and Kneale, p. 83.

The preceding discussion on issues of definition and classification of public space should bring our attention to the ideological background to any conception of public space. Public space is anything but a neutral field. It harbours contradictions and is constantly contested, pulled between stabilising and de-stabilising forces that act on projected ideals and proposed counter-ideals. Any intervention in the public realm, in this sense, is charged with meaning, acting both on the physical properties of places and on the social organisation of publics. Typologies and categories, words like public and private become utterances whose meanings are contextually developed in dialogue (both immediate and social). This dialogue is marked by a particular speech genre that implies and produces its own space so that public space can be understood as *spatial heteroglossia* (or a socio-spatial landscape). This conception though cannot be developed without 'materialising time into space'. Every expression of public space expresses chronotopes further stabilised or destabilised according to the dialogues that constitute it.[360] Conceiving public space dialogically does not get rid of problematic conceptions based on strict boundaries, typologies or ideals, but it insures that their continued use in dialogue (and in design) can co-exist with diffuse and relational models of urban space. It is again in ambivalence that public space finds meaning.

Having now established spatial heteroglossia as a dialogical framework for public space, the next chapter explores its relevance through a survey of the Town Square's dialogical landscape. The various dialogues that have produced and are still producing the project are investigated in order to uncover the relationship between projected ideals and everyday use and management, as well as the multiple chronotopes they express.

[360] This is in relation to historical time as well as to everyday experience. The expression 'town square' has generic historical connotations as does its use in the contemporary city. Similarly, no conception of public space can operate without acknowledging temporal aspects (for example restricted access according to the time of day, or modified uses according to the season).

Plate 31

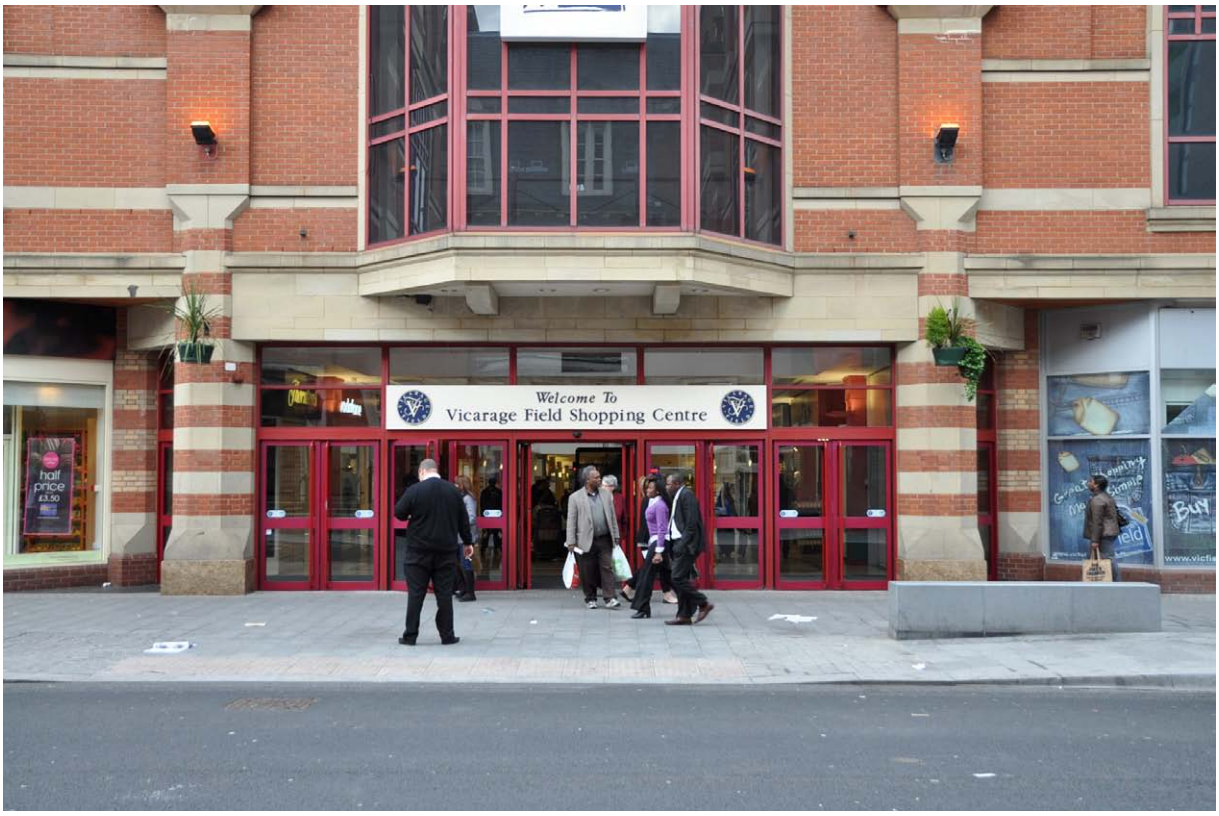
Entrance to Barking Town Hall (top), September 2009, and civic square from above, May 2010.

Plate 32

First floor of BLC on the eve of St George's day, April 2010

Plate 33

Vicarage Field shopping centre on the site of the old Barking football field, Ripple Road.



Jean Brown: After the fire they moved the library to London Road and then, in late 1967, they used what was the old Barking football club, where Vicarage Field is now, with the old toilets and the old vicarage area. We were there until 1974 and we then moved here [BLC]. 2004 they moved us out to Vicarage Field which was supposed to be for a year but ended up being three years because the builders walked off the site. […] When we moved from here to Vicarage Field we took on more customers because we were in the shopping centre, we were on the route to the bus stop, so they had to pass us. So we got busier.

Denise Lovelace: It's very intimate. People liked the old library and Vicarage Field managed to maintain that. Unfortunately it's been lost here [BLC].

INT20100218.

Plate 34

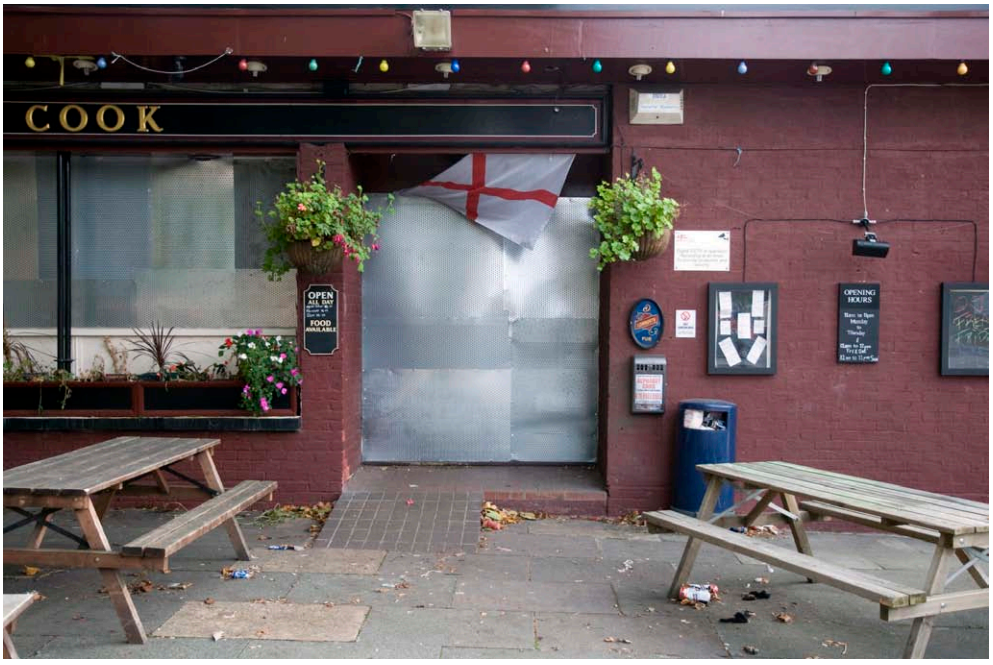
New East London Transit stop on Ripple Road, May 2010.

I heard during fieldwork that the Metropolitan Police is contemplating vacating the Victorian police station to the left, built in the 1890s building rush of public and civic facilities in the Town Centre.

The JD Sports shop to the right was one of the targets of looters during the 2011 London riots. Most of the vandalising took place on Ripple Road around the entrance to Vicarage Field across the road. When police came after the looters from Blake's Corner, about thirty looters fled and regrouped in the arboretum before rushing as one group toward the six police officers attempting to secure the area. The police officers backed up from the incoming rush toward Blake's Corner and the looting of JD Sports and Vicarage Field continued. The event was captured on video by a resident from the Lemonade tower. A resident, we might assume, relatively new to the area.

Plate 35

Captain Cook pub after closure and before demolition, February 2012.



The Captain Cook pub, across the street from St Margaret's church where Captain Cooke was married, stood on the site of the old George Inn. It was raised to the ground in 2012 following an incident involving a stabbing and the ground sodded over. During the summer of 2012 a temporary Olympics-themed pavillion was erected there.

Plate 36

St Margaret's church (top) from Abbey Green
and the Sikh Gudwara on North Street (bottom, formerly the Quaker Friends' House).

Plate 37

Fun fair at Barking Park, September 2009.

'That Barking is determined to face the economic difficulties through which our Country is now passing with a progressive policy is clear by the way the Industrial Exhibition and Historical Pageant has been organised by the Borough, and I earnestly express the hope that these days of depression may soon be eclipsed by a restoration of trade and industry in which Barking can take its full share.'

HRH Prince George speaking at Buckingham Palace, 22 September 1931
quoted in Sue Curtis, *Barking: A History*, p. 103.

Both the Historical Pageant and the Industrial Exhibition were held at Barking Park in celebration of Barking's incorporation of 1931.

2.3 BARKING CHRONOTOPES

Over the course of research, in conversations and documents, the Barking Town Square gradually appeared as a project expressive of a series of social and spatiotemporal elements. Its polyphonic landscape, to use Folch-Serra's term, is constituted by a number of chronotopes (expressions of policies, politics, funding schemes, national masterplans, local action plans, municipal rivalries or design concepts) that were in turn stabilised or destabilised in the everyday use and management of the new space. Describing the Town Square, then, requires a sweep through an extensive relational network of conceptions and their challenges situating it within the various dialogues constructed by, to draw on Holloway and Kneale, the 'constant dialogical interaction of a multiplicity of voices.'[361] Using the framework developed in the previous chapter for dialogical public space, this chapter brings to the fore some of the most prominent dialogues that have and are still producing the Town Square. The initial section of this part, Chapter 6, located the Town Square in the European context of the EPUPS. The schematic line of this chapter follows suit, tracing the many contexts of the Town Square from the national level to its own site-specific context. This path through the project's most prominent discourses was chosen because it best represented my experience, in research, of how my interviewees would situate or frame the Town Square, locating it in country-wide or London-wide regeneration policies, putting it in the context of local rivalries and differences, or still highlighting its own internal discrepancies and conceptual foundations.

TOWN SQUARE AND ENGLAND

The BLC and the new Town Square, Margaret Hodge was quoted saying in 2008, are part of the 'government's vision for integrated public spaces.'[362] Indeed the relationship between the project and the 'vision' of the central UK government is remarkable. The same year, the project featured on the cover of a Centre for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) publication on design and diversity expressing the idea that the government's goals of inclusion and cultural diversity could be attained by projects like the Town Square.[363] In the architectural press, the project is usually contextualised by mentioning its

[361] Holloway and Kneale, p. 82.
[362] Liz Bury, 'Now That's What I Call Architecture', *Building Design*, 20 March 2008, pp. 6–7.
[363] Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), 'Inclusion by Design: Equality, Diversity and the Built Environment' (CABE, 2008).

inclusion in the area of the Thames Gateway[364], and recognised as an expression of New Labour planning and development strategies since 1997 marked in large part by the Urban Renaissance.[365] As such, the space of the Town Square expresses the governmental rhetoric that underpinned its development and completion from 1997 to 2010. The rhetoric of the Urban Renaissance accompanied the push for the 'reurbanisation' of UK cities based on principles of 'sustainable communities', multicultural diversity, good urban design and public and private partnerships.[366]

Renaissance Square

'Toward an Urban Renaissance', prepared by Richard Rogers and the Urban Task Force in 1999, is the first in a series of documents outlining the vision and policy of the New Labour government with respect to planning, urban development and regeneration. It was followed by the 2000 'Our Towns and Cities', prepared by the government in order to implement the principles of the Urban Renaissance[367], and the 2003 'Sustainable Communities' plan[368]. These documents express the central government's rhetoric and attitude toward the public realm of cities, emphasising its relationship to the concept of 'sustainable communities'.[369] The statement 'where we live affects how we live'[370] from the 2000 document expresses clearly the idea supported in these documents that social aspects of the public realm are indivisible from its physical properties: the 'integrated public spaces' mentioned by Margaret Hodge above. The 1999 report's recommendations are extensive as to the way public space must be designed. One particularly relevant point is moving away from isolated pockets of open space to prioritise networks of spaces.[371] Effective relations between spaces become as important as good design for the spaces themselves.

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[364] See Rowan Moore, 'How Barking Is This?', *The Evening Standard*, 11 September 2007, p. 39; Kieran Long, 'This Aesthetic Is Not of Barking. It Is All About Making Obvious What Is Coming in the Future', *The Architects' Journal*, 2007, 30–35; Kieran Long, 'The Future of Places Like This Will Be Delivered by Compromise', *The Architects' Journal*, 2007, 26–29; Joshua Bolchover, 'Exhibition Review: Barking: A Model Town Centre', *The Architects' Journal*, 4 October 2007, p.107; and Abrahams.
[365] Long, 'This Aesthetic Is Not of Barking'; Woodman; and Abrahams.
[366] For a general review see John Punter, *Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance* (Taylor & Francis, 2009).
[367] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Our Towns and Cities: The Future - Delivering an Urban Renaissance' (ODPM, 2000).
[368] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Sustainable Communities'. This policy document directly led to the creation of the LTGDC as the Thames Gateway was identified as one of four 'growth areas' of national significance (p. 5).
[369] See also Appendix G.
[370] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Our Towns and Cities', pt. 4.1.
[371] Urban Task Force and Rogers, p. 28.

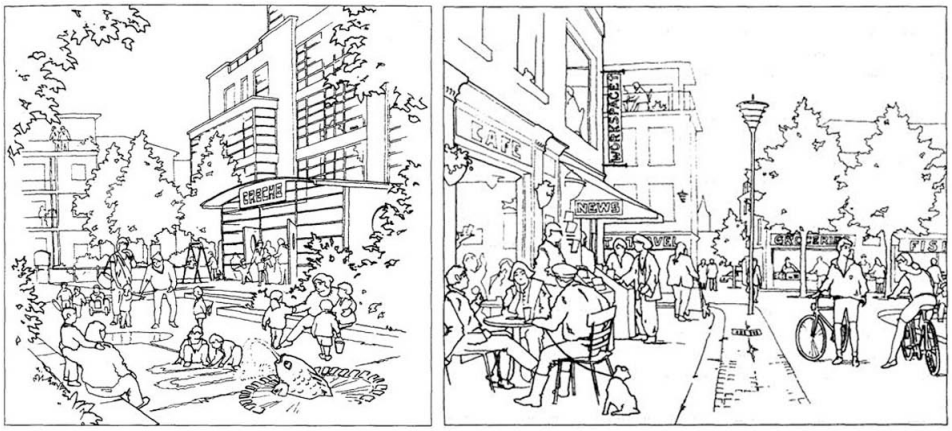

Figure 23. Two drawings from 'Toward an Urban Renaissance'. Left: 'a small urban park or open space, with local facilities acting as the social focus for the surrounding community (p. 37).' Right: 'a mixed-use urban centre (p. 33).'

Overall, the vision of public space expressed in the Urban Renaissance chronotope is one that seeks unity in difference and socio-spatial cohesion. This unified and cohesive public realm is marked by the belief that 'cities make citizens'[372] and good design produces good societies. Claire Colomb unpacks the 'moral and ideological underpinnings' of the Urban Renaissance agenda to show how it is defined by what she calls the 'dialectics of good urban design, "civility" and active citizenship.'[373] She writes that the underlying argument is that 'a well-designed space will encourage "civilized" behaviours, foster social interactions and reduce the motivations and opportunities for antisocial, deviant or criminal behaviours.' [374] Urban Renaissance public spaces indeed tend to be represented as controlled and clean, picturing an idyll of small town community living: lots of trees, lots of people happily mingling and co-existing, open spaces without strict boundaries, small road-side businesses, cafés with outdoor tables, pedestrians and cyclists and not a single car (Figure 23).

This idealised vision of public space is one that tends to express a homogenisation of differences, control, safety, and a contradiction between the call for 'strong and diverse

[372] Richard Rogers quoted in Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Our Towns and Cities', p. 7.
[373] Claire Colomb, 'Unpacking New Labour's "Urban Renaissance" Agenda: Towards a Socially Sustainable Reurbanization of British Cities?', *Planning Practice and Research*, 22 (2007), 1–24 <doi:10.1080/02697450701455249>. The three major aspects of the Urban Renaissance agenda she identifies are the 'urban idyll', 'social mix' and 'strong local communities'. The 'urban idyll' promotes the idea that the city is the new location of traditional values associated with family, community, and healthy relationships between town and country, urban and nature. The concept of 'mix' refers (in the 2000 'Our Towns and Cities') to diversity of use and social groups. She identifies that two aspects of diversity are underplayed in the Urban Renaissance documents: scale (for example diversity in neighbourhoods versus entire boroughs) and scope (diverse people living in the same neighbourhood does not mean their social networks overlap). 'Strong local communities' follows from Tony Blair's call (in 1997) that the bonds of community have to be recreated. Henceforth urban regeneration is to be supported by the actions and mobilisation of cohesive communities.
[374] Colomb, p. 12. The influence of Tony Blair's adoption of the American 'broken windows' policy is strong in claiming that a well maintained area will discourage uncivilised and criminal behaviour.

communities' on the one hand and behavioural control on the other.[375] Iain Borden criticises Richard Rogers' view on urban public space, writing that the vision relies too much on the cleanliness of the piazza rather than the possible differential aspects of the city. He writes:

> Rogers' London is all piazzas, squares, tree lined alleys, etc. The everyday life presented by Rogers is too tame and clean, too close to the great cities of civilisation rather than the everyday of sex, drinking, shouting, contradiction and so forth.[376]

With diversity and gross reality homogenised, the vision becomes the reverse of ideal heteroglossia: a space that abstracts people into citizens, their differences negated for their inclusion into an ideal community.[377]

Figure 24. Publication by *The MJ* and the LBBD on regeneration in Barking and Dagenham, 2008.

In 2008, an LBBD publication claimed regeneration efforts (including Barking Central) to be 'an urban renaissance in East London.'[378] *Building communities, transforming lives* fully adopted the rhetoric of the Urban Renaissance and the dialectic between urban design and social change (Figure 24). With its 'continental' aesthetics[379], unbounded open space[380], ground level amenities, community focus, middle-class-priced flats, café tables, a sushi restaurant…the Town Square is a reification of both the rhetoric and aesthetics of the 'urban idyll' of the Urban Renaissance (Plate 38). This is perhaps best expressed by Peter Bishop of the LDA, speaking after the completion of Barking Central in 2010:

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375 Colomb, p. 13.
376 Iain Borden, 'What Is Radical Architecture?', in *Urban Futures: Critical Commentaries on Shaping the City*, ed. by Malcolm Miles and Tim Hall (Routledge, 2003), p. 114.
377 See Chapter 2.2 and Hirschkop, II, p. 79.
378 Calpin.
379 As per George Barratt's opening comments in Chapter 2.1.
380 Murray Fraser.

> Everybody who thinks public space is a luxury in today's Britain, come to Barking, look at this space for an hour and see the way in which public realm and public space can perform the function of becoming the true focus for civic life…and a space for citizens just to become citizens and just enjoy being in a space that is public and in surroundings which are truly urban. [381]

'I had this whole thing', a Central Londoner who had worked in Barking once told me, 'about trying to find a cappuccino [in Barking] which is so bloody ridiculous…'

The 'benign corporation'

Ken Dytor, founder of UC, was once described by journalist Anna Minton as a 'renaissance man'. She quotes him saying that UC's business model adds value both to the bottom line and to communities, 'the two objectives need not be mutually exclusive.'[382] I asked Ken Dytor what he thought of the Urban Renaissance report, especially since the development model he described sounded as though it was based on similar principles. He first laughed, but then explained that for him, the Urban Renaissance report and UC were two separate markers of 'the spirit of change of the era'.[383] This 'spirit of change' was institutionalised by the central government in 2004 by the creation of new Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) whose primary functions were to solidify relationships between the public and private sectors and insure their partnerships in urban development ran smoothly and were delivered. In addition to the Urban Renaissance then, one of the major chronotopes situating the Town Square in the national context is the LTGDC (as a new UDC) whose area (Figure 25) includes the Barking Town Centre.[384] The LTGDC has land purchasing powers (including compulsory purchasing powers), planning authority over its area and access to public funds to invest in locally developed projects.[385] In 2005 the LTGDC took over planning authority for Barking Central from the LBBD, henceforth assuming responsibility for every planning application submitted for the project.[386]

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[381] AUD20100513.
[382] Anna Minton, 'A Renaissance Man', *Estates Gazette*, 13 April 2002.
[383] INT20110616.
[384] See Appendix H.
[385] The LTGDC acquired planning authority over its two major areas in 2005: Lea Valley (including the 2012 Olympics Park) and London Riverside. Unlike the 1980s UDCs, the LTGDC was not granted ownership of the land they oversaw. London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, *Regenerating East London: a Report on Progress and Future Activities* (LTGDC, 2009).
[386] The LBBD Planning Department still prepared reports that were handed in to the Corporation for consideration in the final decision. Dave Mansfield, INT20100511.

Figure 25. Map of key projects by the LTGDC. 'Barking Town' is in centre. Source: http://www.ltgdc.org.uk

During our July 2010 interview, Peter Andrews listed three ways (distinct from granting planning permission) in which the LTGDC contributed to Barking Central: working closely with the developer to make the scheme viable, purchasing properties on Ripple Road by Compulsory Purchasing Order, and funding part of the public realm. In terms of public space the corporation does not have a strategic vision regarding the projects it supports and takes on.[387] Yet what may be considered a general attitude toward public space did emerge in my conversation with Peter Andrews characterised by a blurring of public and private boundaries ('…the civic and commercial realms shouldn't be separated out and hopefully long term they will be well integrated and there will be a uniformity of the public realm across the Town Centre…'), public-private partnerships ('…I personally went and worked very closely with Redrow on their revision to their plan…'), a strong belief in private investment in the public realm and the commodification of public space ('…we were keen to deliver a high quality product there…').[388] There was still the belief, however faint, that a quality product could deliver the social and economic promises of regeneration. But the question of public realm improvements seemed secondary, especially in a 'dysfunctional town'[389] like Barking whose economy, according to him, is dying.[390]

One the of strongest aspects of the LTGDC's attitude toward public space to come out of the interview (related to the belief in the private sector's role) was a profound mistrust of the public sector for urban development and public realm management.

> The local authorities haven't had the leadership, the means and the resources to actually undertake what is quite a significant regeneration process. […] Barking and Dagenham my goodness up until the election

[387] Unless 'creating an attractive environment' is interpreted as such. 'What LTGDC Does', *London Thames Gateway* <http://ltgdc.org.uk/about_us/what_ltgdc_does.aspx> [accessed 22 July 2010].
[388] INT20100726. See also Appendix H.
[389] This expression is also used in London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, 'Regenerating East London'.
[390] For notes on the position of Barking within the economy of East London, see Appendix V.

> which has changed the character (a little bit) you go look at the local authority members there. These guys are old style white Labour very much entrenched in the past, not willing to accept help from outside, not recognizing there is an issue, and unable to help themselves.[391]

With regards to the 2005 crisis in the project that threatened its cancellation halfway through phase one, Peter Andrews comments how the Corporation 'helped the Council pick up the pieces' and 'give Redrow confidence' thus implying that local interests or lack of competence should not jeopardise the eventual delivery of the project.[392] By taking over planning authority, the LTGDC ensures that the project is 'fit for purpose'[393] according to the agenda of the central government but also that the interests of the developer are respected and the project made viable. As was evident in my interview with Peter Andrews, the antagonism between UDCs and local authorities has not necessarily subsided since the 1980s. The belief is that local authorities are still incapable of viable and efficient development.[394] And that is even though, as Peter Andrews states, the new UDCs were 'taunted as "benign corporations" with increased participation by local authorities.'[395] What becomes clear is that participation means different things for each participant. Tellingly, Peter Andrews praises the later years of the first UDCs because local authorities finally understood what the UDCs were about—rather than the opposite or some middle ground.

The chronotopes of the Urban Renaissance and the LTGDC expressed at Town Square firmly place the project in the context of development and public realm policy at the national level between 1997 and 2010. Given the range of conflicting interests that these chronotopes imply, including idealistic public space, public benefits, financial gain, public-private partnerships, public and private sector conflicts and differing views on public realm financing and management[396], it is incredible the project was completed in the first place. The ideals of the Urban Renaissance (and the 'spirit of change') were reified in Barking along with all the conflicts this created between the public and the private sectors and the various actors involved. The Town Square is indeed a space that was produced by relationships and voices that were never neutral. 'So well done everybody, the architects, the builders, the Town Hall, those in London Thames Gateway, and the private sector, all of them played a role in doing this.'[397]

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[391] Peter Andrews, INT20100726.
[392] For further notes on the 2005 crisis, see Appendix H.
[393] Margaret Hodge, AUD20090930.
[394] See also Mike Raco, 'A Step Change or a Step Back? The Thames Gateway and the Re-birth of the Urban Development Corporations', *Local Economy*, 20 (2005), 141 <doi:10.1080/13575270500053241>.
[395] INT20100726.
[396] At the same time that the Urban Renaissance report claimed the public sector had to be the 'custodian of the public realm' (Urban Task Force, p. 28), Ken Dytor supported the institutionalisation of privately run and maintained public spaces as an 'enlightened' (his expression) approach to the public realm (INT20110616).
[397] Margaret Hodge, AUD20090930.

Plate 38

Town Square on St George's day, April 2010.

'An Urban Renaissance in East London'

Dermot Calpin, *The MJ*, supplement, 2008, p.2-3.

Plate 39

East Street, 2010.

Fred Manson: There was at one point more pound shops in Barking than anywhere else. I tried once to have *ID* magazine run a monthly bit about the best thing found in pound shops in Barking. And I went to Barking Council and they were appalled by this. It's ironic, it's funny, it's true, but they were implacably opposed to the idea.

TBK: Was it too good a reflection of what was happening?

FM: It's too honest a reflection. I thought that by finding some amazing trendy things in the shops people would be able to remember Barking. I bought some amazing things in the pound shops.

INT20091009.

Plate 40

East Street after market with the old Marks and Spencer building closed in 1995 to the left (now Iceland).

We moved here in 1963. Yes, it was really nice in Barking. You had a Marks and Spencer's. Big shops an all that. But it's changed so completely.

Margaret Nicholls, INT20090716.

I think Barking has struggled with its identity for a long while. It used to be quite an affluent place, you know: it had a Marks and Spencer's! People always talk about that!

Jennie Coombs, INT20100305.

In a sense [Barking] did have an identity and it was a very sort of low key place. I mean at the time I came there was a Marks and Spencer in Barking Town Centre. It quickly shut, actually.

Jeremy Grint, INT20101104.

Plate 41

LTGDC advert near the Malhtouse, Abbey Road, 2010.

There are to my mind two drivers in creative industries: one is that the space is simply cheap enough for those pioneers, or the sharp end if you like, of the creative communities to start to migrate to; and then on the back of that is creating some sort of culture, ethos, character, vibrancy that attracts other people there so you start to get a critical mass...

Peter Andrews, INT20100726.

Plate 42

Photo op at Abbey Green on St George's day, April 2010.

'The cross of St George flew proudly above the tower of 13th century St Mary's (sic) church in Barking.

In the abbey grounds below hundreds of excited kids gathered in the sunshine to march behind a huge white dragon, watch jousting knights on horseback and learn about their country's patron saint.

Four-year old Kai Redington, a mixed-race lad with a milewide smile, ran around in a red and white hat refusing to let go of his own St George's flag.'

Rachael Bletchly, 'Our Flag of Unity', *People*, 25 April 2010.

TOWN SQUARE AND LONDON

> If other boroughs can do public space half as well as Barking then they will have done extremely well indeed.
>
> Peter Bishop[398]

The contextual situation of the Barking Town Square in London is contingent on a wide array of chronotopes including political and cultural programmes[399], other London public spaces, its design team coming mainly from other boroughs, and the continued relationship between London and Essex. One chronotope stands out in the development of the project, though, and that is development and public realm strategies of the GLA (created the same year UC won the competition) expressed through the Architecture and Urbanism Unit (AUU), DfL and the 100PS programme.[400]

One in a hundred

In November 2003, the Barking Town Square was chosen for phase two of the 100PS programme.[401] Launched in 2002 by GLA Mayor Ken Livingstone, the programme brought together current and future public space projects across Greater London with the goal of supporting one hundred projects before the 2012 Olympics. The programme was run by the AUU (later renamed DfL), headed by Richard Rogers, and its position with regards to urban space was along the lines of Urban Renaissance principles, emphasising reclamation of the city (re-urbanisation), a public realm linking open spaces and buildings, activities mixing leisure, politics and commerce, and the idea that good public space can be the cause of socio-spatial transformation.[402]

The AUU did not have delivering powers and was primarily intended to assist local authorities with procurement and securing funds. 'I did quite a lot of work', Jamie Dean recalls, 'trying to keep everyone's attention on [the project] but also talk about delivery and making sure that the whole thing actually happens.[403] Unlike its central government counterpart, the LTGDC, the AUU did not have executive or planning authority; they were,

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398 AUD20100513.

399 Including the involvement of the RCA in the Metamorphosis project, studies by educational institutions (like the LSE's 'Outer City' document), and two major London Planning awards for best new public space (2010) and placemaking (2011). Even post-2008-elections documents by the GLA still include the project as an example of 'best practice'. See Mayor of London and London Living Places, 'Shaping Places in London Through Culture' (Greater London Authority, 2009).

400 The London connection in the media is usually established by mentioning the project's inclusion in the London Thames Gateway (as above) or in the 100PS programme. See for example Bolchover; Rowan Moore, 'Ken and His City of Skyscrapers', *The Evening Standard* (London, 28 April 2008), p. 18; Woodman; and Nicola Homer, 'Barking Square Planting Regenerates Area Image', *Planning*, 23 April 2010, p. 16.

401 Mayor of London, 'The Mayor's 100 Public Spaces Programme: Second Phase' (Greater London Authority, 2003).

402 Mayor of London, 'Making Space for Londoners' (Greater London Authority, 2002).

403 INT20100408.

in this sense, much more benign. The decision to include the Town Square was reached in 2003, while the index of deprivation of the LBBD was quite low but before the critical milestone of BNP victories in the 2006 local elections. As Mark Brearley says in our interview, the decision made sense as a coincidence between the AUU's collaboration with the LBBD, which started in 2002, and the 100PS programme.[404] The organisation's participation in the project involved taking part in the interview process to choose a public realm designer, doing design reviews and making non-statutory comments on design aspects of the public realm which can be summarised as insisting on high quality materials, adjusting the footprints of buildings and their massing to create better access routes and views into the square, and creating better connections between adjacent spaces on East Street and Ripple Road.[405] The AUU praised the 'coherent strategy' employed for the public realm, mostly in establishing spatial connections between new and existing elements, that managed to 'pay due respect to the civic importance of the area.'[406]

What its recognition in the 100PS programme does for the Town Square is to bring the efforts that are happening locally in relation with similar efforts across London and give the project London-wide significance. The principles of cohesion and connections, both characteristics of the Urban Renaissance and the 100PS chronotopes, are applied not only locally but at the scale of Greater London.

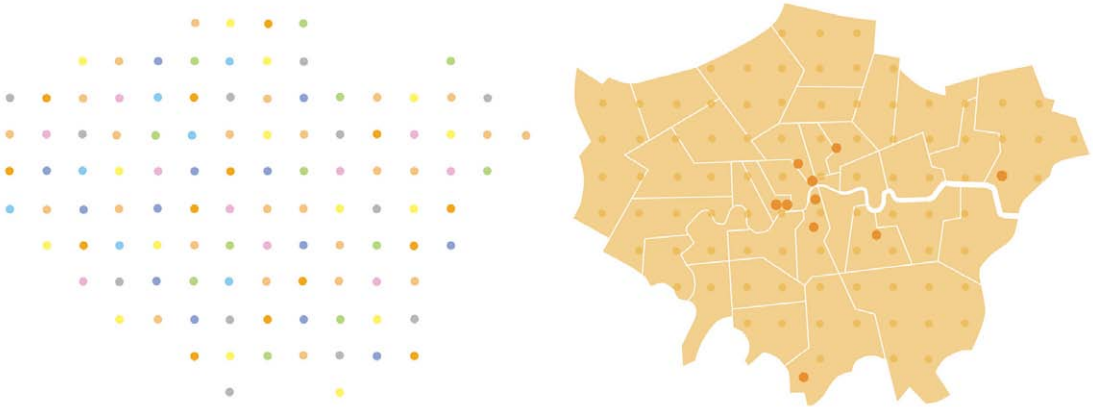

Figure 26. Diagrams from 'Making Space for Londoners' by the Mayor of London and the AUU. The diagram on the right shows the location of phase one projects.

As the above diagrams show (Figure 26), the public realm of London is represented as a singular entity punctuated by an array of one hundred similar dots (public spaces) of varying colours: difference in an otherwise homogeneous field. Read this way, it is true that the Town Square has an aesthetic that is closer to this homogeneous representation than to

[404] INT20100727.
[405] Summarised from discussions with Fenna Wagenaar (INT20091021B), Jamie Dean (INT20100408) and Mark Brearley (INT20100727) as well as two DfL documents: Jamie Dean to Ken Dytor, 'Barking Town Square', 11 November 2004; Jamie Dean, *Barking Town Square* (GLA Architecture and Urbanism Unit, July 2006).
[406] Dean.

the local specificity of Barking. It is further from the historical morphology of the town and closer to similar recent public space projects across London.[407] Further from Town Quay, Blake's Corner or East Street (which informants considered English types), and closer to Acton Town Square, Brixton Central Square, Gillett Square or Bermondsey Square (Map 1). All these examples, designed and built since 2000 share similar chronotopes: the *plaza dura*, the Urban Renaissance, Ken Dytor's 'spirit of change', and the 100PS programme.[408] Although some of these examples could be considered 'town squares', relative, for example, to the presence and accessibility of civic amenities around the space[409], the way they express the chronotopes listed above has more to do with aesthetic qualities and funding than with typological categorisation (Plates 44, 45, 46, and 47). In each example there is a propensity for hard surfaces over soft surfaces (durability and low maintenance are key), free access (no fences or barriers), multi-functionality, a heterogeneous composition of elements rather than a centralised focus (dialogue between movement and rest), the celebration of trees as singular elements, the inclusion of diversity and ambiguity into the architectural language (a bench that is not a bench, playable landscapes), and finally a mix of public and private investment in the project.

Given its expression of chronotopes of public realm development in the GLA between 2000 and 2010 it is no wonder some local residents feel a strange alienation from the Town Square.

> If you walk around other areas of Barking and then come here you won't think it's in the same place. It sort of looks a bit out of place if you know what I mean. It's really nice here. You wouldn't think it's in East London of all places.[410]

Not Essex

As the 1965 expansion of Greater London to include the Essex Municipal Borough of Barking has characterised the identity of the town, the Town Square expresses a (centrifugal) destabilisation of the old Essex chronotope and a (centripetal) stabilisation of the Greater London chronotope in Barking. A local resident wrote that the greatest change she had witnessed in her lifetime was how 'Barking altered from a clearly defined town on

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[407] See Appendix I and Appendix U.
[408] Bermondsey Square is the only one of these projects not to have been part of the 100PS programme, but it was developed by Urban Catalyst and designed by East Architect (also designers for Acton Town Square) at the same time as the Barking Town Square. It has also won the London Planning award for best new public space one year after the Barking Town Square (2011).
[409] Particularly in Brixton and Acton. See Kieran Long, 'East/Acton Town Square', *Architects Journal*, 2007, 27–37; Anonymous, 'Design for London: WHAT WE DO', *Design for London* <http://www.designforlondon.gov.uk/what-we-do> [accessed 1 August 2011].
[410] INT20100415C.

the London/Essex border into part of the Greater London overspill.'[411] The Town Square marks a departure from what Jeremy Grint identified on his first visit to Barking as a 'typical Essex market town'[412] toward a homogenisation of the town and its public realm within the wider London field. Presenting the project at New London Architecture (NLA) in August 2011, Jeremy Grint summarises the impact of the Town Square succinctly: 'The scheme symbolised that Barking and Dagenham was open for business. And that we were looking outward and felt like we were part of London rather than Essex.'[413]

[411] Personal letter received from Maria Cowtier, November 2009.
[412] INT20101104.
[413] AUD20110819.

Plate 43

View toward the Town Square from the A13 overpass.

We did have a bit of a row with the architects. They wanted to put a huge sign on top that said 'Barking' so you could see it from the A13. I said 'well if you don't know where you are when you are coming from the A13...' [laughs] We are not a Tesco's. We do not need a big sign saying we are here.

Charles Fairbrass, INT2010025.

TBK: At one point you even had a sign saying 'Barking' on top of one of the buildings.

Paul Monaghan: : Yes we did. I don't think they liked it. They thought it looked a bit cheap. I thought it would be a very useful sign but they couldn't quite see that. We thought of using it again at the top to the tower because we couldn't do a top.

INT20100507.

Plate 44

Gillett Square, London (Hackney), N16.

Plate 45

Bermondsey Square, London (Southwark), SE1.

Plate 46

Acton Town Centre, London (Ealing), W3.

Plate 47

Windrush Square, London (Lambeth), SW2.

Plate 48

Barking Urban Pioneers final event at the Architecture Foundation, April 2011.

'The Architecture Foundation's Urban Pioneers have spent the last three months critically exploring Barking's built environment and public realm with a variety of creative professionals. The Pioneers have been working with AHMM, artist/filmmaker Verity Keefe, photographer Gemma Thorpe, architecture practices Maccreanor Lavington, Muf and We Made That; along with Thomas-Bernard Kenniff, and oral historians from Eastside Community Heritage.

The Pioneers will present and discuss their work from the project at a celebration event to be held at The Architecture Foundation on Monday 4 April, 6-8pm.'

<http://www.architecturefoundation.org.uk/news/2011/mar/barking-pioneers-final-celebration-event> [accessed 15 November 2012]

TOWN SQUARE AND BOROUGH

There is no love lost between Barking and Dagenham. Tension between the two towns reaches at least back to 1965 when the greater parts of the Municipal Borough of Barking and the Municipal Borough of Dagenham were incorporated into the single London Borough of Barking. The omission would go on until 1980 when the Borough was renamed London Borough of Barking and Dagenham. To this day the name drop has been an issue as the 2009 renaming of Barking College as Barking and Dagenham College can attest to. The change in appellation reflects the divide in the whole of the Borough and the conflicting identities between the two areas, something that is hardly apparent from the outside. From the inside though, it rapidly becomes clear that this tension is felt in local politics, in public spending and in cultural emphasis. When asked to describe Barking, people with a knowledge of the area will readily refer to differences with Dagenham, bringing up, for example, their respective markets (Plate 52)[414], differences in density, housing type, demographics… One cannot be conceived without the other.

The Barking Town Square expresses the asymmetry between Barking and Dagenham which in recent years has found its way into development strategies. Dagenham residents I met complained that most regeneration spending focuses on Barking and evidence seems to agree with them. Peter Andrews, whose LTGDC area includes the Barking Town Centre, but no significant Dagenham sites, reflects that 'the problem with Barking is Barking *and* Dagenham. You've got Barking members and you've got Dagenham members. And they don't agree.'[415] This sentiment is confirmed by Barking Councillor Jeanne Alexander who says: 'What divides the Council is Barking *and* Dagenham. It's a real huge split.'[416] An anonymous informant from Central London goes further by describing Dagenham as 'a huge artificial lump…graft onto Barking' and 'not the natural development of a town.' Fred Manson discusses how, even if regeneration money could be spent on Dagenham, he would be hard pressed to know how and where. 'In Dagenham', he says, 'there is nothing to give emphasis to.'[417] And so investment in the LBBD has indeed gravitated toward the area of the Borough with more history[418] and better transport

[414] For an analysis of Barking's street market, see Appendix V.
[415] INT20100726.
[416] INT20100223.
[417] INT20091009.
[418] While some of Barking's defining historical moments date back to the seventh century (with Barking Abbey) and its prosperous Victorian years, Dagenham is an area marked by much more recent development: the low density sprawl of the massive Becontree estate (still the largest public housing project ever built) and the Ford factory (now partially closed), both constructed in the 1920s. For notes on the Becontree Estate and further historic differences between Barking and Dagenham see Appendix S and W.

connections[419], a tendency that has exacerbated the division within the Borough by giving emphasis to Barking over Dagenham.

The Town Square not only expresses the stabilisation of the Barking versus Dagenham chronotope through the way it was brought to be, but also in its spatial characteristics. What Jamie Dean first found remarkable about Barking when he visited in 2002 was that it had a fairly legible and dense civic core. The development of the Town Square has contributed to reaffirm this characteristic by creating a compact space continuous with the surrounding movement patterns yet contained by the surrounding buildings. In a sense, the space of the Town Square is very much a reproduction of the space of the Town Centre (see next section). In Dagenham, though, there is no civic core. In comparison to Barking, the area around the Dagenham Civic Centre (Plate 50) is a vast expanse of open land characterised by lawns ringed by major thoroughfares, low density suburban housing disconnected from the main roads (the continuation of the Becontree Estate), the immense Becontree Heath park, and a few isolated residential towers. The Civic Centre itself, built in 1936 and therefore designed at the same time as Barking Town Hall, expresses the spatial qualities of the area with its front façade stretching about 100 metres across and facing a parking lot, hedge and lawn, compared to the Town Hall, 20 metres across in the front and facing a pedestrian square. Each place is, as it were, at the scale of their respective context.

[419] The area around Barking Station has one of the highest PTAL index in Greater London.

Plate 49

Highway A13 toward Dagenham, May 2010.

'...If you're looking for a thrill that's new
Take in Fords , Dartford Tunnel and the river too
Go motorin' on the A13

It starts down in Wapping
There ain't no stopping
By-pass Barking and straight through Dagenham...'

Billy Bragg, 'A13 Trunk Road to the Sea'.

Plate 50

Dagenham Civic Centre main entrance (top) and front area (bottom), March 2010.

Plate 51

Dagenham Heathway station, May 2010.

In Barking there are always people on the streets wandering around… go to Dagenham and there's a few people waiting for a bus to get away because there is no reason to be there.

Fred Manson, INT20091009.

Plate 52

Dagenham Market, May 2010.

No Romance Thrillers
by Yemisi Blake

i sell the tales of legends

back street bare knuckle bruisers
beaten, black, blue, red box-sets

Play:

a shakey hand holds an eye to it all.
two men, big, burly, topless,
tired, minds gone, throwing fists
blood red hands, face, face, face.

No stop button here:

one rule: try not to kill the other guy.
but ask nicely and I'll show you
the special ones, the no romance thrillers.

§

a slow build of blows stacked until the clean strike,
a heartbeat trips on a stray jab to the jawbone,
falls flat into a double-disc whole dug ring-side.

Pause

until he arrives on my shelves tightly sealed,
ready to be played, looped,
fighting for another day.

Written for the Molten festival 2008
after a visit to Dagenham Market.

TOWN SQUARE AND TOWN CENTRE

> The public realm in the Town Centre is of particular importance in changing the image of Barking, in attracting inward investment and in providing a safe and convivial environment for the community.
>
> LBBD design brief for Town Square[420]

> It's a huge pleasure to come here today to celebrate the opening. A huge pleasure to walk from the station earlier on this afternoon. I actually walked through the Town Centre that is changing very very quickly and for the better. A Town Centre that is beginning to hang together and where public space is the element that is providing a cohesion for it.
>
> Peter Bishop[421]

Figure 27. Front page of the *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 15 March 2000, showing the winning Urban Catalyst and Avery scheme.

When it is presented in the context of the Borough, the Town Square is usually referred to as a focal point for regeneration: a 'heart'[422] (Figure 27), a catalyst for further investment[423], a flagship project for regeneration[424], or a community focus.[425] It is the aesthetic expression of regeneration and change in the Town Centre; a chronotope of planning in Barking from the last thirty years. References to the Town Square as a focal point or a heart for the

[420] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.
[421] AUD20100513.
[422] Kelly Harrison, 'A New Heart for Barking', *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 15 March 2000; London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.
[423] Margaret Hodge, AUD20090930.
[424] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Action Plan' (LBBD, 2003).
[425] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Action Area Local Plan (draft)' (LBBD, 1984).

Town Centre, however, are conceptions that do not reflect what I experienced in fieldwork. It is not the centre of activity of the Town Centre, but one of many points of focus. The Town Square is not isolated in the Town Centre, but is defined by its relations to major places in the area (Figure 28), relations to gradual shifts in the morphology of the town[426] and the way these relations are practiced and produced by activity.

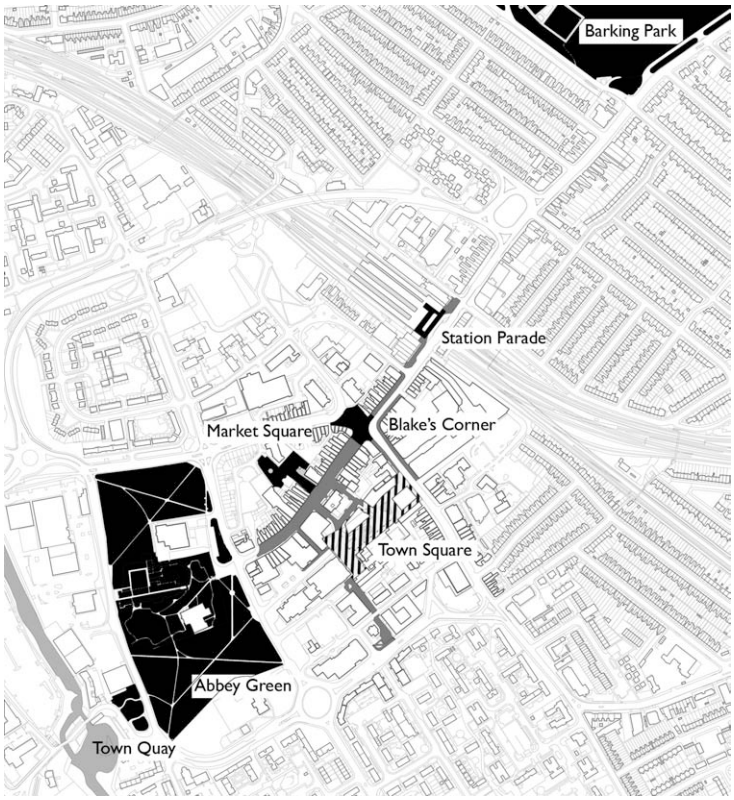

Figure 28. Map of the Town Centre (in part) showing some of the main public spaces.

These relations mean that identifying any one area as centre, heart or focus is highly problematic. Sarah Butler reports a conversation she had with Fred Manson describing some of the work he did for the AUU in Barking:

> He was saying that when he brought all the different developers engaged in all the different bits of regeneration to talk to each other they were all saying 'well this is our bit and we've discovered that right here, in the centre, is the heart of Barking!' And then the next would say: 'and we've discovered that right in the middle of our bit is the heart of Barking!'[427]

[426] For example: the opening of Barking Station in 1850 shifted the centre of gravity of the town away from the Town Quay and the Broadway; the construction of a series of municipal and civic buildings at the end of the nineteenth century between East Street and Ripple Road, including a new Town Hall (now the Magistrates Court); and the decision, in 1931, to build another Town Hall behind the Magistrates Court and not facing any street. See also Appendix U.
[427] Sarah Butler, INT20091001.

Since the early 1980s, the Barking Town Centre has been seen as an 'opportunity area' for the LBBD.[428] A Town Centre Action Area Plan was prepared between 1981 and 1985[429] and since then a series of planning and regeneration documents, frameworks, studies and action plans have worked and re-worked the development of the area. Two such documents are particularly relevant to the design of the Town Square. They are the 2003 design framework by East and Sergison Bates (commissioned by the AUU) and the 2006 urban design principles by Allies and Morrison. These reports were meant as guidance to the local authorities in their developing of an action plan and funding strategy for the Town Centre. Tellingly, both reports present the Town Square development as part of broader transformation in the Town Centre without ever taking it as a centre or unique focal point. The Town Square is usually secondary (especially for the 2006 plan) to the main commercial street (East Street). Again, re-emphasising the importance of a cohesive and connected public realm for major public space policy of the time, the reports emphasise, first of all, the importance of a well connected and coherent Town Centre.

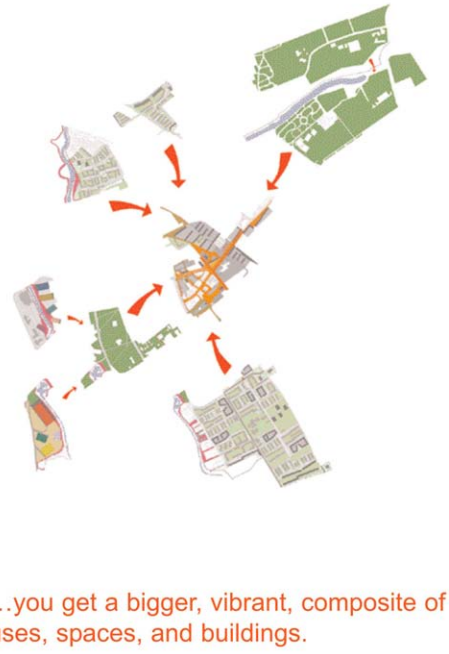

Figure 29. Diagram from the 2003 report showing the Town Centre as a series of areas floating in space connected by orange arrows. The 'High Street Network', which includes the area of the Town Square, is in the centre.

[428] This appellation drew on the London Plan of 1976. Greater London Council, *Greater London Development Plan: Approved by the Secretary of State for the Environment on 9 July 1976* (London: G.L.C, 1976).
[429] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Action Area Plan: Report of Survey' (LBBD, 1982); London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'BTC AAP (draft)'; London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Action Area Local Plan' (LBBD, 1985); London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Action Area Local Plan: Report on Public Consultation' (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 1985).

This idea is translated in the 2003 report into the 'High Street Network' (Figure 29), a spatial concept that unifies the fragmented open spaces of the core of the Town Centre (station, Blake's Corner and Town Hall) as a single network into which they strongly recommend the future Town Square be included.[430] The 2006 plan similarly dissects the Town Centre into zones that are then re-connected using a series of related public spaces.[431] Both studies express quite clearly what appears to be a consensus on the space of the Town Centre: it is to be a coherent, well-connected network of discrete places or districts (and in this sense relatively homogeneous in design). At my 2010 workshop for the LBBD, a map of the Town Centre was pinned to the wall highlighting open spaces in relation to the Town Square (similar to Figure 28). Fred Manson stood in front of it before the session started and commented on how it all makes sense when you look at it this way. Later in the session he told the group that the Town Square is

> part of the Town Centre and it's making this whole place work. The Abbey Green, the shopping and the ambition for a new Market Square. It's complimentary to the things coming to this area and a further draw for people who come to shop.[432]

Smooth relations

With an increased number of private developments in the Town Centre, the public realm is presented as an opportunity to bring coherence to an otherwise *ad hoc* built environment. From this point of view, public realm design in the Town Centre is a centripetal force in the otherwise centrifuge of private developments. On the back of the 2003 framework, which led to the 2003 Area Action Plan, the LBBD implemented the desire for a uniform public realm with the Barking Code. Developed in 2004 by Burns and Nice, the Barking Code is a document which sets design principles for the Town Centre's public spaces to create a unitary language across the Town Centre using materials, colours, sizes, etc. It is 'a systematically arranged and comprehensive collection of materials, products and detail finishing techniques including maintenance considerations.'[433] The Code identifies four major 'character areas' for the Town Centre: the High Street Network, Abbey Green, Riverside, and the surrounding residential areas of various eras and typology (Figure 30) but concentrates primarily on implementing the vision of the High Street Network concept.

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[430] East Architects and Sergison Bates, 'Barking Framework Plan' (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 2003), p. 21.
[431] See Appendix J.
[432] Fred Manson, WRK20100921.
[433] Burns and Nice, 'The Barking Code: Final Report', 2004, p. 5.

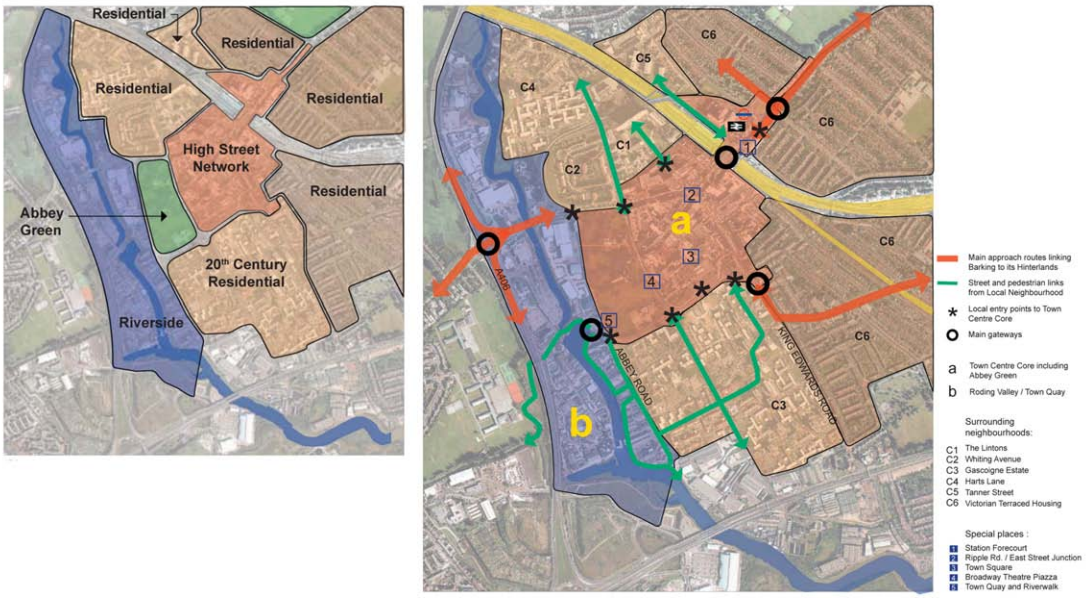

Figure 30. 2004 Barking Code with Town Centre 'character areas' (left) and analysis of access, special places, gateways and movement (right). The future Town Square is identified as 'special place no.3'.

It professes to give coherence to the Town Centre while at the same time claiming opportunities for the various character areas to distinguish themselves from others; difference built on an underlying homogeneity. The first two principles listed in the document are: 'coherent and integrated approach throughout Town Centre; and reinforce and interpret local character to achieve distinctive neighbourhoods.'[434] The document identifies 'special areas', like the Town Square, as places where other materials may be used in combination with the Code's palette. When muf was hired for the Town Square commission later in 2004, their brief stipulated the need to design within the principles of the Code.[435] The brief to muf states that the Council is seeking quality public realm in the entire Town Centre, hence the Barking Code, and that current schemes neighbouring the Town Square are complying. Given the 'special area' of the Town Square, however, the brief notes that the project 'needs to set a very high standard for the Town Centre as a whole' and should be 'exemplary'.[436] The example set by the design of the Town Square, however, was strong enough to create friction in two areas. First with Transport for London (TfL) and the relation between the Town Square and their proposed East London Transit (ELT) route on Ripple Road (which did not comply to the Code); and second, in fact a consequence of the first, with the 2004 Code itself as muf's design was used to reinterpret the principles and palettes set out in the document. As Fenna Wagenaar described it in our interview, DfL eventually commissioned muf to redo the Barking Code

[434] Burns and Nice, p. 17.
[435] This was notably pushed by the AUU as evidenced in Dean to Dytor.
[436] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square', sec. The quality of the environment.

so that the principles of the Town Square would now 'set the tone' for the rest of the Town Centre (Plate 58). By funding pilot schemes they 'spread a little bit everywhere and suddenly there was more of the muf code than the Burns and Nice… It's so difficult, and so much scheming!'[437]

The basic principle of muf's Barking Code remains the same: to find coherence within fragmented developments across the Town Centre. But while the 2004 Code approached the question of coherence and cohesion from the visual and cultural significance of places, the muf Code introduces temporal and social dimensions to the question. The temporal dimension concentrates on the possibility of 'knitting together' projects that would otherwise be out of phase [438] implying an alternative approach to master planning without a master plan. This way, the Code makes explicit the connection between its socio-spatial agenda and the production of space over time (the process of the architectural project) which has the effect of shortening or flattening several years of development and change into a much shorter and coherent chronotope. The social dimension stands out strongly in comparison to the 2004 document. The public realm is to be not only attractive, durable, and safe, but also takes on the role of supporting social cohesion in the Town Centre.[439] Get the public realm wrong, the comment implies, and the community might fall apart.[440] The social aspects of the Code come out in four related sections: play, art, temporary interventions, and events.[441] It is not explicitly stated that these aspects are distinct from surface treatment, lighting, seating or greenery. As a whole, the document does not make a sharp distinction between material aspects and social aspects of the public realm. Finally, what is perhaps most remarkable about this new Code is that the four sections of play, art, temporary interventions and events introduce the notion of uncertainty into what should be a document produced for certainty and measurable outcomes. In addition, the document implies a conception of publics and the users of the public realm that reflects socio-cultural traits that are not entirely predictable—as opposed to the 2004 Code in which the user appears to consume public space in a predetermined way. Weaving material, temporal and social aspects of the public realm with a degree of uncertainty, muf's Barking Code reads as a retroactive-brief for their own design of the Town Square.

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[437] INT20091021.
[438] Muf architecture/art, 'The Barking Code for the Public Realm and How It Should Be Applied 2008-2012' (LBBD, 2010), p. 2.
[439] Muf architecture/art, 'The Barking Code'.
[440] Exactly the implications of the principles coming out of the Urban Renaissance.
[441] These are major aspects of the Town Square project and its peripheral public art commissions, but also important chronotopes for public space design at the time (see Part III).

Yet the Code is not a legally binding document but a guideline for future projects. It is up to the determination of regeneration officers, planners and politicians to ensure that the cohesion of the public realm is designed accordingly. The pilot projects muf designed, while they were developing the Town Square scheme, have the effect of spreading 'little bits of the Code'[442] and extending the language of the Town Square outward (Plates 58 and 59). But still, Jeremy Grint comments that the Council can only 'insist' that new public spaces be designed to the standards of the Town Square.[443] During our interview, Jennie Coombs emphasises the importance of the Council's determination by reiterating the belief in a cohesive public realm. For her, missing the connections between individual public space projects might result in overall failure. Focusing on the relation between the projected Market Square and the Town Square, or 'the commercial side and the civic side', she sums up: 'If we didn't do the middle of East Street we'd miss the trick really wouldn't we? We've got to tie them together.'[444] However the multiple actors who have influence on the area of the Town Centre make it difficult to achieve public realm uniformity and the Code guidelines run up against the indeterminacy of use and the restrictions of management. Ensuring that any design code is adhered to does not in any way seem to ensure that what is constructed will withhold the test of time and use. The recent repairs on the highly detailed pilot project for the 2004 Code to the standard of 'uncoded' public realm[445], for example, show that there is still a lot missing in terms of coordinating the multiple actors responsible for designing, delivering and maintaining the products of design guidelines.

A model town centre

Outside of official discourse, the Town Centre is rarely conceived as a network. After all, the High Street Network and the Barking Codes conceptualise the potential that exists with a fairly compact Town Centre and existing socio-spatial relations into an abstract unity. While the idea is agreed upon in regeneration terms, it is not so clear in terms of use and management. The experiences of local residents I spoke with, as well as my own experience during fieldwork, described embodied and concrete relational networks based on everyday routines, but never pointed to a unified Town Centre beyond degrees of proximity, familiarity or convenience. Brent Pilkey, for example, lived in the Town Centre for about two months just north of the train tracks, and although he had been at the East Street Market, he had very little knowledge of the Town Square development. Eric, who lived in

[442] Fenna Wagenaar, INT20091021B.
[443] AUD20110819.
[444] INT20100305B. For our full exchange on this subject see Appendix J.
[445] See Appendix J.

Barking six months at Ropeworks, had no experience of the Town Centre beyond the station or the St Paul's Road sports centre. A librarian who had worked at the Central Library since 1967 had a mental map of the Town Centre focused on the space between the London Road car park and her place of work. My own experience of the Town Centre also produced a particular space characterised by relationships between the Town Square and other spaces. Walking across the entire area revealed distinct places, spatial relationships, and specific chronotopes of the Town Centre, like the quiet emptiness of the place at 6am, garbage-littered East Street after market closure, catching Jeremy Grint in the evening leaving Town Hall on his way to the station, bumping into Council workers at the Spotted Dog pub on Longbridge Road on a Friday afternoon, walking to the Sikh Gurdwara (Plate 36) with local residents for a visit and a free lunch, meeting the Gascoigne chit-chat group in a former retail space on the estate (Plate 23), happening upon a fun fair at Barking Park after having wandered farther afield (Plate 37), and so forth.

Even though there is a certain fluidity of relations across the Town Centre, planned activities rarely spill over or link different spaces. Events that use the network of the Town Centre are rare and require careful orchestration, as experienced on St George's Day in April 2010.[446] Generally, if anything is off the main spine of East Street or the market, it draws very little outside attention. One of the issues is that management does not cut across the various areas of the Town Centre like the concept of a homogeneous and coherent public realm would ask for. The events of World Book Day, when library staff were promptly reprimanded for reading aloud at the market, perhaps best illustrates the conflicts and factions that exist across the Town Centre. The tendency is to bound activities with civic character to the Town Square and have commercial activities at East Street, Blake's Corner and the new Market Square.[447]

This touches on one of the most interesting paradoxes in the Town Centre: the existence of two logics: one, the desire to have fluid connections across town; two, the clarity of the historical division between the town's civic and commercial areas. The latter is what Jennie Coombs pointed out earlier, what so impressed Jamie Dean on his first visit and what Peter Andrews reacted so strongly against. The legibility of Barking's civic core is as much a legacy of historical developments (including the building of the railway, the Victorian construction of civic amenities and the choice to build the 1931 Town Hall facing a back street) as it is something reaffirmed today by projects like the new Market Square now being built on the opposite side of East Street, away from the Town Square

[446] See Appendix J.
[447] Although local authorities had previously spoken about organising cultural markets on the Town Square, this has also proved difficult. When I visited in August 2011, East Street and Blake's Corner were used for an African market while the Town Square remained unused.

(Plate 62).[448] Even bringing retail onto the Town Square has had mitigated success (Plate 61).[449] In a comment that questions many of the chronotopes of the Town Square (Barcelona, Urban Renaissance, 100PS), Mark Brearley thinks that such an isolated civic core can be an issue:

> Usually urban public places are streets and swellings of streets into the broadways and high street places, market places… That's the traditional pattern. So to carve out a square separate isn't that common and it takes a bit of doing.[450]

But although the intention of the Town Square is, in a way, to reaffirm the civic quality of the space, this intention is made difficult by the nature of the project itself. That is, as Fred Manson explains: 'If it became a popular place where people sat there talking having a marvellous time until 3am then the people in the houses would be very very unhappy.'[451] Creating an active civic space, according to him, challenges the everyday reality of people living above—not to mention Town Hall employees complaining about noise from events on the Square.[452] The ideal of a coherent and legible civic core runs up against the reality of use, management and the fact that most people do not make such sharp distinctions between civic, public and private. As Zoinul Abidin points out, the notion of a civic core runs the risk of being lost on most people:

> When you talk to people in the market, do they know where the Town Square is? How many people know? I think sometimes it's a myth in the community because it's professionals who know it as a Town Square.[453]

In 2007, muf and Kieran Long curated an exhibition in the newly opened BLC Gallery called Barking: A Model Town Centre. More than a tongue-in-cheek play on the exhibition being composed of scale models built out of balsa wood, the implication is that the Town Centre is an ideal to aspire to. But, as Zoinul Abidin has commented, abstract ideas (like a well-defined civic identity or the unity of the High Street Network) are constantly challenged by everyday experience and dialogic relations.

In Barking, the relational thinking behind the High Street Network chronotope and a cohesive public realm is one that seeks relations between discrete, well defined places. In this way the Town Centre is simultaneously homogeneous and heterogeneous, where one

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[448] Planning documents from the 1980s emphasise that development in front of the Town Hall should be for 'civic, community, social and recreational purposes.' London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'BTC AAP (draft)', p. 10.
[449] The original BLC café (Tulip) has closed, replaced by Barking Apprentice ; a sushi shop has opened and closed at the foot of the Lemonade tower ; and the entire ground floor of the Bath House remains vacant. Tesco and Travelodge are still in business in Pianoworks.
[450] INT20100727.
[451] INT20091009.
[452] Jeremy Grint, AUD20110819.
[453] WRK20100921.

place cannot be conceived outside of the socio-spatial relations it has with other places. It would be inconceivable, for example, to understand activity and fluctuations in use on the Town Square without recognising movement patterns across the Town Centre and the attraction of places like Blake's Corner (Plate 63), arguably the busiest and most complex space of the area. In itself, the Town Square treated as a civic space is an abstraction of the spatial and social realities of the Town Centre. By straddling many categories between civic, public, residential and commercial, the project emphasises conflicts between discrete places and networked (diffuse) spaces. It also projects the ideal of a singular public space within a Town Centre defined by relations. What the Council effectively did by building the Town Square was to bring these contradictions to the front steps of their Town Hall.

Plate 53

Barking Station parade pre-modifications (top), May 2010, and after (bottom), July 2012.

Plate 54

Town Quay garden and seating at the historic industrial centre of Barking.

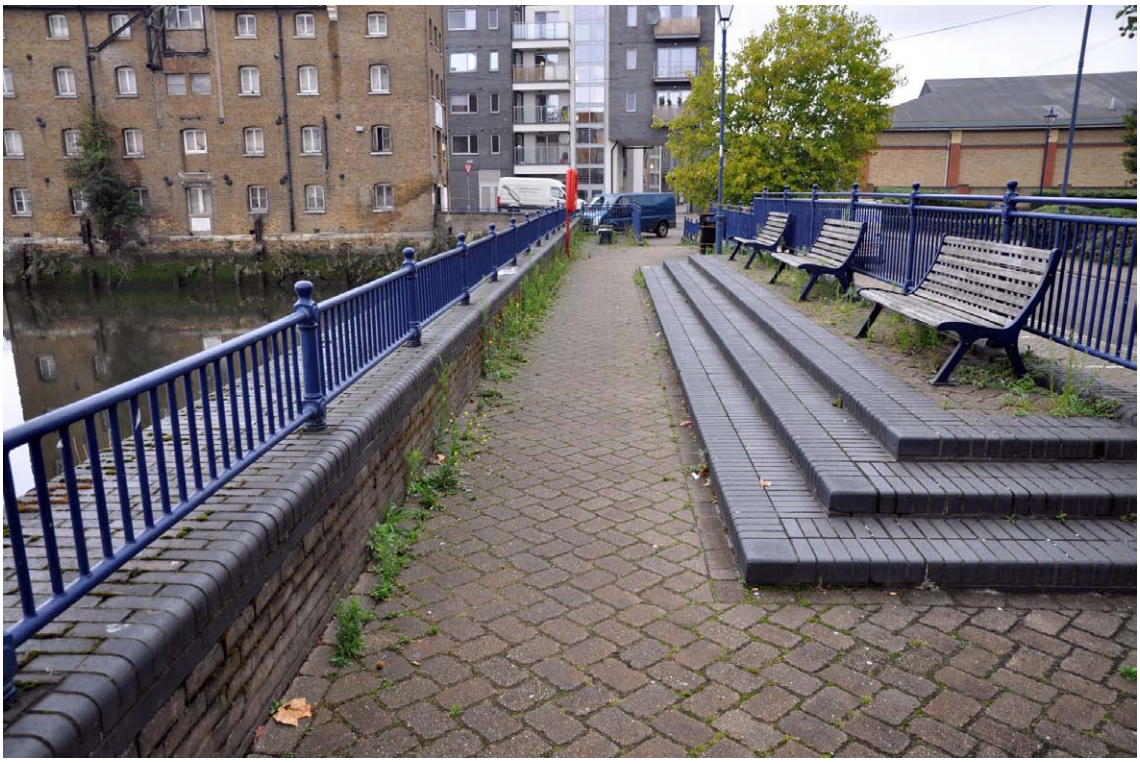


Plate 55

Gascoigne Estate, September 2009.

Plate 56

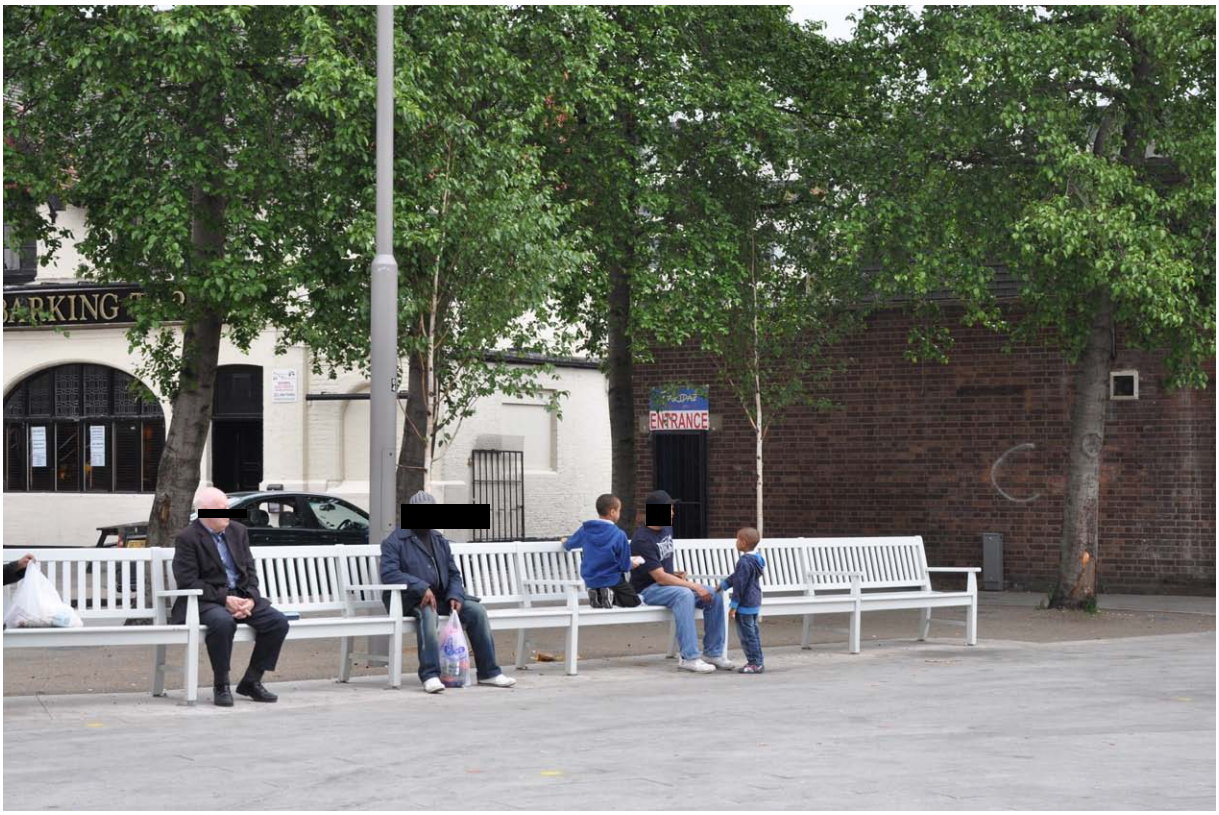
Abbey Green on St George's day (top), April 2010,
and with new play equipment (bottom), August 2011.

Plate 57

Barking Market at Blake's Corner, 2010.

Plate 58

Spreading the Barking Code at Blake's Corner, May 2010.



The most important space is now the Town Square so this is what should set the tone for the rest.

Fenna Wagenaar, INT20091021B.

Plate 59

Spreading the Barking Code near the Primary Care Trust (top), April 2010,
and at St Paul's Road (bottom), July 2012.

Plate 60

Burns and Nice pilot project for the 2004 Barking Code at the Broadway Theatre after repairs, August 2011.

'North Street and Broadway provide an important interface between the High Street Network and Abbey Green. The Abbey was historically closely integrated with the Town Centre and this interface needs to be strengthened and enhanced both physically and through material links.'

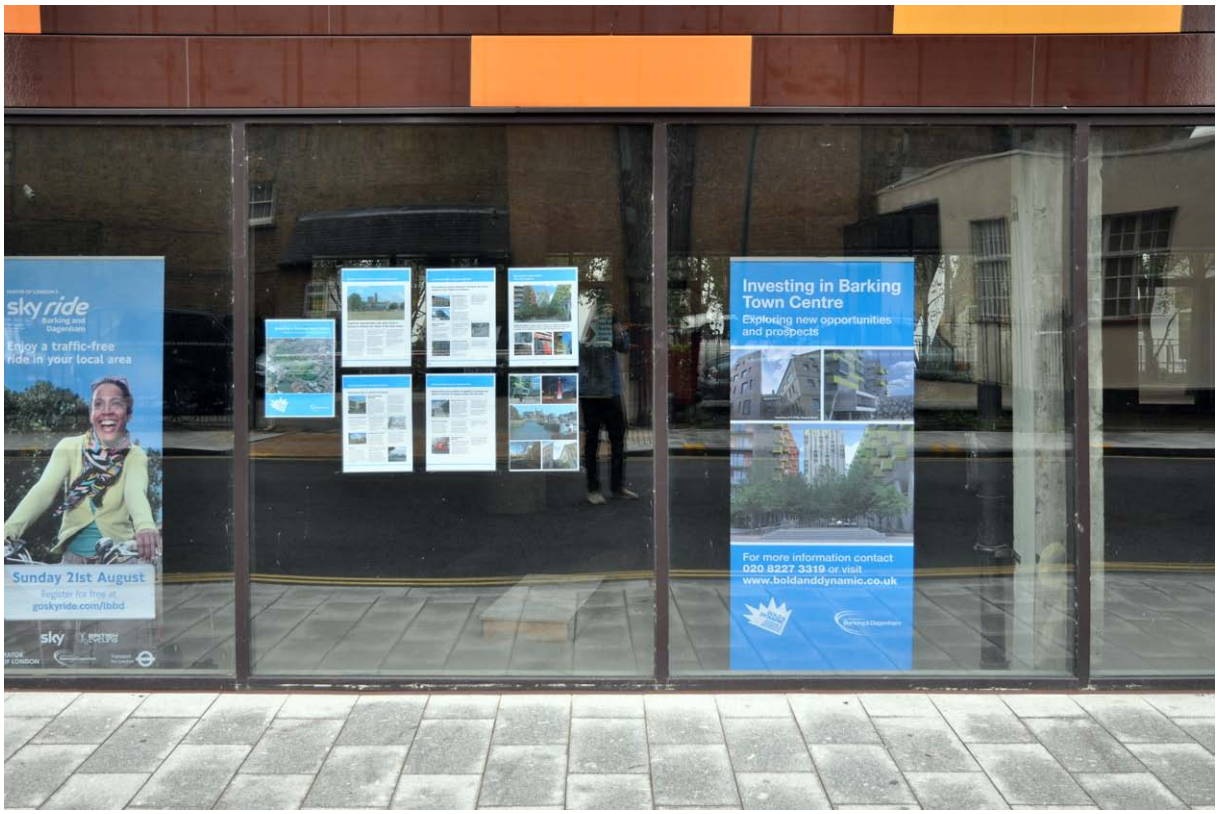
'Broadway: The creation of a multi-purpose all-year round space that will stimulate informal meetings outside the theatre and link the Abbey Green to the new Town Square.'

Burns and Nice, *The Barking Code* (2004), p. 7 and p. 5.

Peter Watson, showing a group of planners around the Town Square, commented that the monolithic benches (right on photograph) had to be re-carved to unseatable shapes because they were attracting loitering from the nearby Captain Cook pub (Plate 35).

Plate 61

Unoccupied ground floor of Bath House, August 2011.



'Investing in Barking Town Centre' panels posted on the ground floor of the Bath House building:

'Significant improvements have been made in Barking to enhance the status of the Town Centre.

Barking Town Centre is changing fast. Its reputation for high quality design and public realm is growing with numerous awards including best European Public Square.'

Plate 62

Magistrates Court on East Street from the future Market Square (top), September 2009, and construction of the Market Square from opposite angle (bottom), July 2012.

Plate 63

Public speaking at Blake's Corner, May 2010.

Joyce Petchey: It never occurred to me before, but we've never had a centre. What I would say was a centre...

Ron Petchey: I mean there was the baths behind the town hall and the fire station was next to it. But we wouldn't call it the centre.

JP: You just went to various associations. So different people would be associated with different areas. But I would say that Blake's corner was the place.

RP: The centre of the hub.

JP: It was a crossroads.

INT20091124.

TOWN SQUARE AND TOWN SQUARE

So far, the contextual relationships presented have been external to the Town Square, following the idea that, as an entity of its own, the project can only be conceived within the set of relations that link it internationally, nationally, London-wise and locally. Having now arrived, as it were, on site, we can question the clarity of the external boundary of the entity Town Square. Fieldwork and analysis have shown how this boundary is indeed questionable. That is, even when conceiving it in relation to others, the entity Town Square appears ill-defined: there are internal relationships, uses and management issues, and boundary maintenance that stabilise or destabilise its chronotopes at all levels. Before looking more closely at some of these, a better understanding is required of some of the main conceptual ideas underpinning the project that work, consciously or not, to challenge the possible fictional unity of the Town Square.

Spatial assemblage

> TBK: What do you think of the space of the Town Square?
>
> Joyce Petchey: Well I...
>
> TBK: Not the buildings.
>
> JP: Oh the buildings?
>
> TBK: Not the buildings.
>
> JP: The space that's left?
>
> TBK: Yes, the Town Square.
>
> JP: Are you talking about… The Town Square is actually by the Learning Centre?
>
> TBK: That's right.
>
> JP: Well I wouldn't call that a town square because it's only a tiny bit of ground! Now, you see, I didn't realize that that was going to be *the* Town Square, although I have followed their plans.[454]

The confusion expressed in this short exchange between Joyce Petchey and myself reflects three of the defining characteristics of the Town Square project: a building-open space dialectic; a confusion of toponymy; and a spatial arrangement that favours multiple readings. When asked to share thoughts on the Town Square, most people immediately start speaking about the buildings. Because public realm and buildings were developed simultaneously as one project and under one contract, they are identified as a single

[454] Joyce Petchey, INT20091124.

affectation of Barking's identity.[455] It is only when pressed that people comment on both separately. In interviews, participants in the project would sometimes separate public realm from buildings, but only to reconnect them later on—sometimes inadvertently. On some occasions, the relationship between public space and buildings would become a matter of contention between professionals involved, with individual prizes attributed to both separately or emphasis given to one over the other. On other occasions they would be presented as inseparable, for example in the development of the footprint of the buildings in relation to the public realm.[456] Indeed, if we understand space dialogically, the Town Square's public realm cannot be understood in isolation from its surroundings.

The diffuse boundary between public space and buildings in the project is reflected in the confusion in toponymy. Indeed the signifier Town Square refers to three different things: the civic square (the parvis of the Town Hall); the collection of civic square (including the Folly), arboretum and arcade (the public realm contract to muf); and Barking Central including public realm and buildings. No wonder Joyce Petchey and I, in the interview excerpt above, sound confused. I quickly added 'not the buildings' because of previous interviews in which I would ask about the Town Square and realise later that my interlocutor had been speaking about the buildings. So it is not surprising that Joyce sarcastically comments that the Town Square is just a 'bit of ground' after we have stripped it off of the surrounding buildings because, while I want her to comment on the entire space including the arboretum, she understands Town Square to refer only to the parvis.

As early as 2002 the open space of the project was arranged into three distinct areas by AHMM: the civic square (or piazza), the library square and the 'gateway' (Figure 31). As the project developed over the years the principles remained more or less the same. In 2003 English Heritage made recommendations about the 'intended character, enclosure and spatial differentiation of the *three new public spaces*.'[457]

[455] This was more prevalent with elderly and long-term residents who related more strongly with the transformation effected by Barking Central.
[456] Muf make a point of this, emphasising the 'generosity' of AHMM in modifying the footprint of buildings to accommodate for design development of the public realm. Although the series of plans showed to emphasise the point includes a number of plans developed before muf's involvement in the project. Muf architecture/art, 'Barking Town Square by Muf Architecture/art', 2008, p. 8.
[457] Ray Rogers to Dave Mansfield, 'Town Square, Clockhouse Avenue and 10-26 Ripple Road, Barking', 14 February 2003, p. 2. My italics.

Figure 31. AHMM's drawing for the 2002 planning application. The three open spaces are from left to right the Gateway, the Library Square and the Piazza.

The 'gateway' square on Ripple Road was abandoned first, and Paul Monaghan argues that before muf was hired, the basic principles were in place (here 'square' refers to the civic square):

> When muf came on board we had the idea of the square, we had the idea of this long space. […] But we never did anything other than code it. And then muf came along, kept that pretty much as it was, and came up with the arboretum.[458]

Because Town Square was the name given to the project in 2000, it came to be attached to a series of spaces rather than a single space (as Avery's 2000 scheme showed). The confusion continues to this day, as we saw earlier, and has also found its way into the management of the area. While the Town Hall is at 1 Town Square, the Ropeworks is at 1 Arboretum Place. When I asked representatives of the local authorities, under whose management the Town Square fell, I had mixed responses. Nobody seemed to know if the Parks department had taken over the arboretum (the 'soft surface') but not the civic square, and if the Roads department had taken over the civic square (the 'hard surface') but not the arboretum. It is not surprising then, as we will see later, that the local authorities struggle with their branding of the place since there is uncertainty as to exactly what area they are branding and managing.

[458] INT20100507.

Figure 32. Plan of the Town Square with major access points.

Spatially there is no point of view from which to experience the area as a whole. The visual connections between different elements of the project and to and from neighbouring spaces are not all direct (Figure 32). From Ripple Road one can only catch glimpses of the Town Hall and the view down the arcade does lead the eye but not to a striking visual end point (Plate 65). The Magistrates Court and Bath House partially block the view of the space from East Street (Plate 64) and the southern access from Axe Street is blocked by an electric sub-station and the extending arm of the gallery.[459]

The area of the Town Square is thus conceived, understood and managed as a network of spaces and buildings rather than a single thing. The public realm part of Barking Central was never designed in isolation. The way it started out as three spaces only makes sense in relation to the buildings that framed them and were drawn at the same time and by the same design team (AHMM). So like the Town Centre, the Town Square can only be understood according to dialogical relations between its constituent parts.

Designing relations

Before muf took over the Town Square commission, the drawings from AHMM showed relative homogeneity across the spaces. Muf's treatment of the given spaces accentuated the differences between them, giving a valued response to AHMM's otherwise unspecified utterances. The brief for the public realm recommended treating the spaces 'as one' in keeping with the principles of the Barking Code. It admitted, however, that 'design interventions which depart from this, to reinforce legibility and draw people into the Town Square spaces may be required.'[460] In project notes from 2005, muf wrote that they were

[459] This was debated by DfL who felt it was possibly the project's main weakness, diminishing the impact of the High Street Network and a cohesive public realm across the Town Centre. See Dean to Dytor; and Dean.
[460] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.

'departing from the briefing note to "treat as one space."'[461] In interviews, Liza Fior describes the differential treatment of spaces in relation to the 'rhythmic' spatial arrangement given by AHMM: 'We pushed the attempt to give a sense of rhythm and tried to make places of compression as well as places of openness.'[462] In the same interview, she explains how the 'dialogue between spaces' also acted to counteract the 'sameness that is inevitable when there is that much development in that short amount of time.'[463] Paul Monaghan spoke positively about this, preferring an approach that would play off their already 'loud' buildings and give more focus on how space could actually be used rather than something that would extend the aesthetics of the building onto the space.[464]

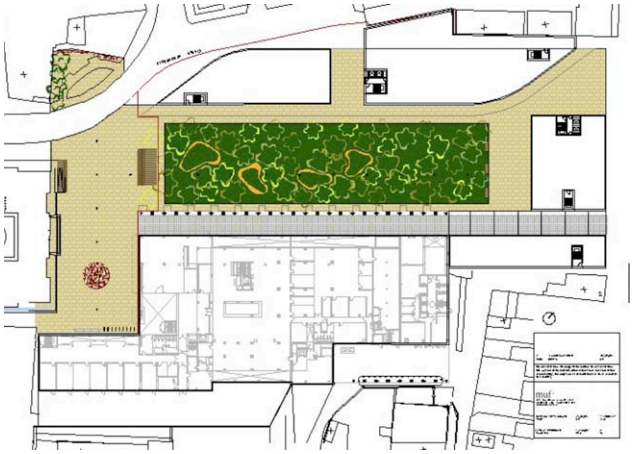


Figure 33. 2005 plan by muf.

Drawings of the project over the years show how the dialogue between different areas is not an afterthought, but something that evolved with the project. Two of the most telling are from 2005 (Figure 33) and 2006 (Figure 34). In the first, the arboretum is represented as a solid block. A single paving material extends across the entire site. The lone 'orator's tree' in front of the Town Hall disrupts the otherwise empty space and is an early example of an attempted carnivalisation of the space (see Chapter 11).

[461] From a digital file found on muf's server. The note was not kept in the 2005 'Design Principles' document submitted to the LBBD.
[462] INT20101207.
[463] INT20101207.
[464] INT20100507. This, he recalls, was Martha Schwartz's proposal in the 2004 interview.

Figure 34. 2006 plan by muf.

In the 2006 plan the relation between the different areas becomes much more pronounced. The arboretum has lost its rigid boundary. The arcade has been fully appropriated and bleeds into the arboretum and stage. Clockhouse Avenue is covered by the pink carpet of the parvis which is now free of any clutter. Café tables are shown spilling out of the BLC café and onto the Square. The ground of the arboretum is the same colour grey that appears to bleed to the edge of the drawing and connect with other spaces in the Town Centre, including the Barking Code pilot scheme near the health centre (bottom left of Figure 34). Eventually, some of the loose boundaries are readjusted in the final project, but while retaining the overall relational qualities.

The heterogeneous nature of the design is reproduced in critiques as well. Regardless of whether they emphasise the 'oppositional' quality of the project[465] or its balanced response to context[466], it always tends to be based on an interpretation of difference and ambivalence in the scheme. In some instances this ambivalence is celebrated as a critique of regeneration and urban development, in others it is celebrated because it makes sense of a difficult situation, multiple actors and tense local context. The heterogeneity of the project is not lost on local residents either. Once asked to describe the open space (and not the buildings) they will usually make sharp distinctions between 'the trees', 'that bit of pavement', or between various individual elements (the stage, the small chair). The different areas allow them to focus their comment on smaller distinct elements rather than an unmanageable whole.

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[465] Long, 'East/Acton Town Square'; Kieran Long, '2000-2010: The Architectural Legacy', *The Architects' Journal*, 22 December 2009. Long is also re-quoted by Liza Fior during lectures: 'The architectural critic Kieran Long called the project whimsically oppositional...'

[466] Beatrice Galilee, 'Return to the Picturesque', in *In Favour of Public Space: Ten Years of the European Prize for Urban Public Space*, ed. by Magda Angles (Barcelona: Actar, 2010), pp. 89–90; and Woodman. Galilee interprets the division of the project into discrete elements rather diminutively as a key autonomous decision by its designers, an ethical stance on local identity, history and regeneration. Woodman's critique of the project as a set of 'adjacent territories' is interesting but reads in large part as the reported voice of its designers. See Appendix K.

Regardless of whether we regard typologies as appropriate distinctions or not, the labelling of a project as a *town square* will inevitably conjure up connections and expectations of a certain kind. The brief to muf emphasised the importance of Barking's civic core by stating that the design should reinforce existing and new civic uses.[467] This was taken full on by the designers who constantly reiterate the importance of the civic as the main expectation of a town square.[468] In their 2005 design notes, muf recognise the division that has happened between the civic and the everyday life of residents: 'Many of the traditional civic functions no longer take place in the Town Hall.'[469] They continue saying that with plans for the BLC to remain open until 10pm on weekdays 'new possibilities for the civic can be explored.'[470] What these possibilities are is not clear, but early diagrams and drawings (before and after their appointment) show how the project for the Town Square is conceived as a way of trapping the movement of pedestrians across the site, slowing them down and metaphorically framing their experience of the place in meaningful activities rather than as a simple thoroughfare (Figure 35 and Figure 36).

Figure 35. Muf diagram showing a possible temporary occupation of the site as an extension of the hoarding for phase one, 2005.

[467] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.
[468] This is evident from separate discussions with Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw.
[469] Muf architecture/art, 'Design Principles', 2005.
[470] Muf architecture/art, 'Design Principles'.

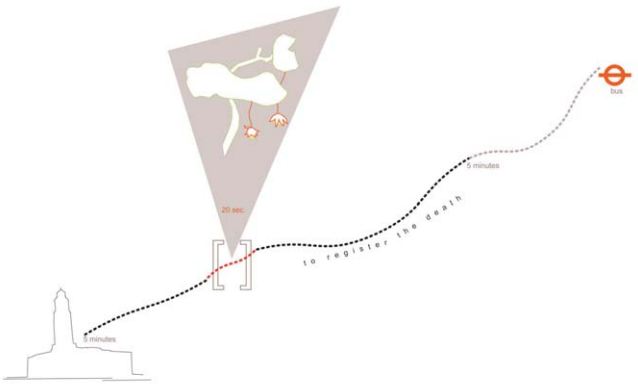

Figure 36. Muf diagram expressing the trapping of time at Town Square. Here an early idea (2004) about registering a death. They later acknowledged this did not take place at Town Hall anymore so 'new possibilities' had to be found.

The 'new possibilities for the civic' appear to rely, according to both the design brief and the designers' notes, in the ability for the Town Hall and the BLC to 'spill into the Town Square' and how these 'can be seen as a way of experiencing democracy and learning as lived experiences.'[471] Draft notes made for muf's 2005 report hint at one of the eventual formal expression of this 'spilling out' and their current negotiations with AHMM: 'At present the learning centre is a one entrance building.'[472] Eventually, a second entrance to the BLC would be opened onto what turned out to be muf's most explicit translation of their civic ideals in the built project: the arcade.

The history of others

More so than the *plaza dura* aesthetics of the civic square, the designers gave form to their idea of 'civic grandeur'[473] in the arcade. Liza Fior's London MET lecture on the Town Square started by describing the 'sense of loss' felt in Barking in the face of rapid change brought about by private investment and regeneration strategies. 'What was most fragile in this situation was a sense of the civic' and what spurred muf to, as she says, 'bring in some history.'[474] This history I found while searching through muf's folders. There were three main precedents in their archives that were also acknowledged in interviews: chandeliers, the Moscow metro and the Palais Royal. As it turned out, the three were usually presented together in slide presentations (Figure 37) as precedents for the civic qualities of the arcade

[471] Muf architecture/art, 'Progress Report: Expanding the Brief', 2005.
[472] Muf architecture/art, 'Progress Report'.
[473] Liza Fior, INT20090926; Alison Crawshaw, INT20100929 ; Alison Crawshaw, AUD20110819.
[474] Liza Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience' (unpublished Lecture presented at the Real Time, London Metropolitan University, London, 2010).

and extrapolated to the whole of the project.[475] Indeed, when I asked her how the firm had acted on the political and social issues of the Borough, Liza answered that it was addressed by the 'insertion of civic grandeur' in their scheme, particularly with the arcade's chandeliers.[476] This idea, Alison Crawshaw commented separately, came from the Moscow metro, which was 'about a civic place with grandeur and one of the themes that carried through.'[477]

Figure 37. Slide from digital presentation by muf in 2005 with Moscow Metro at top, chandelier examples bottom left and Palais Royal bottom right

In contrast to the civic square which is effectively devoid of any symbolic civic elements apart from the existing Town hall, the arcade gives the designers the possibility of dressing up one of the surrounding buildings and extending the language of the Square across the boundary between open space and building.[478] In fact the arcade is exploited as a threshold between Ripple Road and the Town Hall, between the BLC and the arboretum, between the Ropeworks residential complex and its entrance on 'Arboretum Place'. The threshold quality of the arcade is expressed in its material finishes, its ground covered in a chequered motif of black and white terrazzo tiles inspired, as the designers say, by Edwardian garden paths. This, it might be claimed, gives the otherwise foreign historical precedent of the arcade a particular local flavour. Given the relatively rare occurrence of Edwardian garden paths in Barking (I have never seen one), however, the architectural language of transience may be lost on most if not all local residents, especially given the cultural diversity of the Town Centre's publics and their relative transience. An early idea about using the tiled floor of a famous local restaurant may have had more resonance with local residents, but

[475] DSP20050225; DSP20050311; DSP20050400; and DSP20060524. All slide presentations were found on the muf server. The presentation to AHMM in April 2006 does not include these images.
[476] Liza Fior, INT20091026.
[477] INT20100929. She also mentions 'civic grandeur' as the background for the arcade and the chandeliers in her lecture at NLA on 19 August 2011.
[478] The 'grandeur' of the arcade (in the sense of height in French) is a result of a decision by the LBBD to retain the structure of the 1974 library for the BLC. See Appendix K.

would have arguably diminished the effect of civic grandeur.[479] The same could be said of the chandeliers. Those presenting the project, muf or DfL for example, will usually make a big deal out of the installation of 'designer light fixtures' in the arcade (Plate 69).[480] Fenna Wagenaar, for example, presents the chandeliers as the counter-balance to oft criticised buildings. The same people who dislike the buildings like the chandeliers, she says, because the arcade is well designed with expensive materials showing dedication and care.[481] My impression is that the design of the arcade is supported wholeheartedly by outsiders to the Borough and design professionals. From within the Borough, residents tend to be indifferent to its aesthetics, seeing little local reference or significance—unlike what Fenna Wagenaar implies.

'This aesthetic', comments Kieran Long with regards to phase one (including the arcade), 'is not of Barking.'[482] Indeed, the symbolism used by the designers in giving form to their conception of the civic cannot be argued to be 'of the place'.[483] The arcade, out of all the other elements of the design, is most evidently quoting from the history of other places, 'bringing in history' in order to reconstruct a civic identity for Barking. While the spatial configuration of the Town Square may express local historical chronotopes (Victorian Barking, 1931 incorporation), its material finishes and aesthetic expression destabilise these same chronotopes by reformulating an idea of the civic sourced from other places and times.

Subversive vegetation

While searching through muf's archive of site research I came across a series of striking photographs taken in 2005 of vegetation overtaking or reclaiming the built environment of the Town Centre (Figure 38).

[479] This idea about the floor of the arcade is rarely brought up. Liza Fior: 'There was a fish shop on site called Pesci's [that had to be demolished]. The patterned floor partly came from there because the first thing we tried to do was to get the actual floor of the shop and put it on the square (INT20091026).'
[480] Muf collaborated with lighting designer Tom Dixon.
[481] INT20091021B.
[482] Long, 'This Aesthetic Is Not of Barking'.
[483] References to Italian architecture also came up strongly, but with the arboretum balustrade detail rather than the arcade.

Figure 38. Site research photograph by Liza Fior (unconfirmed) from August 2005.

These photographs would later turn out to be part of an LBBD commission to muf for a study of greenery around the Town Centre. Whether this study or the decision to have significant greenery at Town Square came first is unclear, but what is clear is that a conceptual idea about vegetation at Town Square emerged quite early on. The subversive power of these 'feral deposits', in muf's own terms[484], witnessed around the Town Centre seems to act, at Town Square, as counterpoint to the civic elements of the design and the architecture of regeneration. This can be effectively expressed, in its conceptual stage, by a photograph entitled 'beauty' found on the muf server (Figure 39) which may be the origin of their proposal for a temporary installation on site (Figure 35).

Figure 39. Photograph by muf of planters at Town Square seen through hoarding, January 2005.

The arboretum thus became the formal expression of this subversive nature (if we discount the abandoned idea of the 'orator's tree', Figure 33), first developed as a dense and mysterious wooded area. Yet Liza Fior is usually quick to point out the pragmatic logic behind the idea:

> We did a first sketch which showed that the area of the arboretum was always in shadow. So we made the shadowy part more mysterious while

[484] This is the label they gave their folder for images to include in their report (completed December 2005).

> making the space of the plaza more of an open air living room. These were the first two spaces that were held in relation to each other.[485]

The relation between the civic square and the arboretum is indeed presented by the designers as oppositional; however, the most striking representation of the arboretum as the feral counterpoint to the civic is in relation to the arcade (Figure 40 and Figure 41).

Figure 40. Draft of December 2005 dossier with notes by muf.

Figure 41. Original drawing by muf, 2005, with 'less trees'.

Another crucial point in the conceptual development of the project occurs when the wooded area is put in direct relation to the future library. While the early juxtaposition with the civic was expressed rather bluntly in the renderings above, it now transforms into a more playful relation in which the 'contrast' of the arboretum

> derives from an image of nature as escapist and other worldly. It takes as its model the enchanted forest of Midsummers Nights Dream or Dear Brutus, as a site of liminality and transformation.[486]

The arboretum takes on the ambivalent qualities of carnival, something which deliberately appears in the large night rendering below (Figure 42).

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[485] INT20091026.
[486] Muf architecture/art, 'Barking Town Square', p. 43.

Figure 42. Perspective drawing by muf of the arcade and arboretum around 2006.

The other-worldly qualities of the forest are reinforced by attempts to link narrative and literature to the arboretum (Figure 43). In the 2008 dossier for the project, each species of tree is presented alongside a quote from literature that mentions it. The goal, as muf recognise, was to have the library actively involved in the animation of the space. This would culminate in 2008 with a collaborative project called Metamorphosis to create links between library and arboretum (see Chapter 12).

Figure 43. Slide from a digital presentation by muf in 2005

The promise of the wooded area as a counter to the civic elements of the project is not strongly upheld by the completed project (Plate 71). With merit in its own right it does not necessarily hold up to the idea of mystery and subversion that was supported and is still supported by its designers. From its beginnings as a mysterious wooded area, dark and other-worldly, the arboretum ends up being civilised…once described by Liza Fior as a 'fantasy Town Hall and civic space.'[487] Rather than offset or subvert the spaces of the arcade and the civic square, the arboretum complements them. The aesthetics of the arcade are used to transform the forest into an *arboretum*, a civilised forest![488] The same chandeliers as in the arcade hang from lamp posts. The ground is taught and controlled (with even one insert of Edwardian tiling). The planting scheme, even down to shrubs and ground cover, is meticulously planned. The connection to the library is left to the discretion of the

[487] Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.
[488] For the relation between politics, civic grandeur and the arboretum, see Appendix K and Plate 4.

management and the memory of a few librarians. Designed in detail after the civic square and the arcade, the arboretum has the characteristics of words uttered in response to previous utterances, and whose genre has been inflected by the temporal evolution of the dialogue. This is similar to the arcade, even though it does not acquire elements of the architectural language of the arboretum, whose position and meaning in the project are nevertheless affected by its neighbour; from a Manichean juxtaposition of light and dark (Figure 40) to a controlled carnivalisation of civic qualities.

The dialogues presented up to this point set up the Town Square as a dialogical landscape expressive of a number of chronotopes and conceptions: the Urban Renaissance, the 100PS programme, the LTGDC, Barking versus Dagenham, the Barking Code, the High Street Network, the civic and the feral, etc. In some of these dialogues, stabilising and destabilising forces are already being felt: decisions made or actions taken, for example, to include the Town Square into the LTGDC's remit or into the 100PS programme, to give emphasis to Barking over Dagenham, to choose particular routes through the Town Centre, to define three spaces instead of one, or still to choose design concepts based on juxtaposition and subversion. In the next chapter, emphasis is given to those decisions and actions that significantly affect the dialogical public space of the Town Square and challenge its ideals, designs and projections.

Plate 64

Views toward the Town Square from East Street, May 2010.

Plate 65

Views toward the Town Square from Ripple Road, August 2011 (top) and May 2010 (bottom).

Plate 66

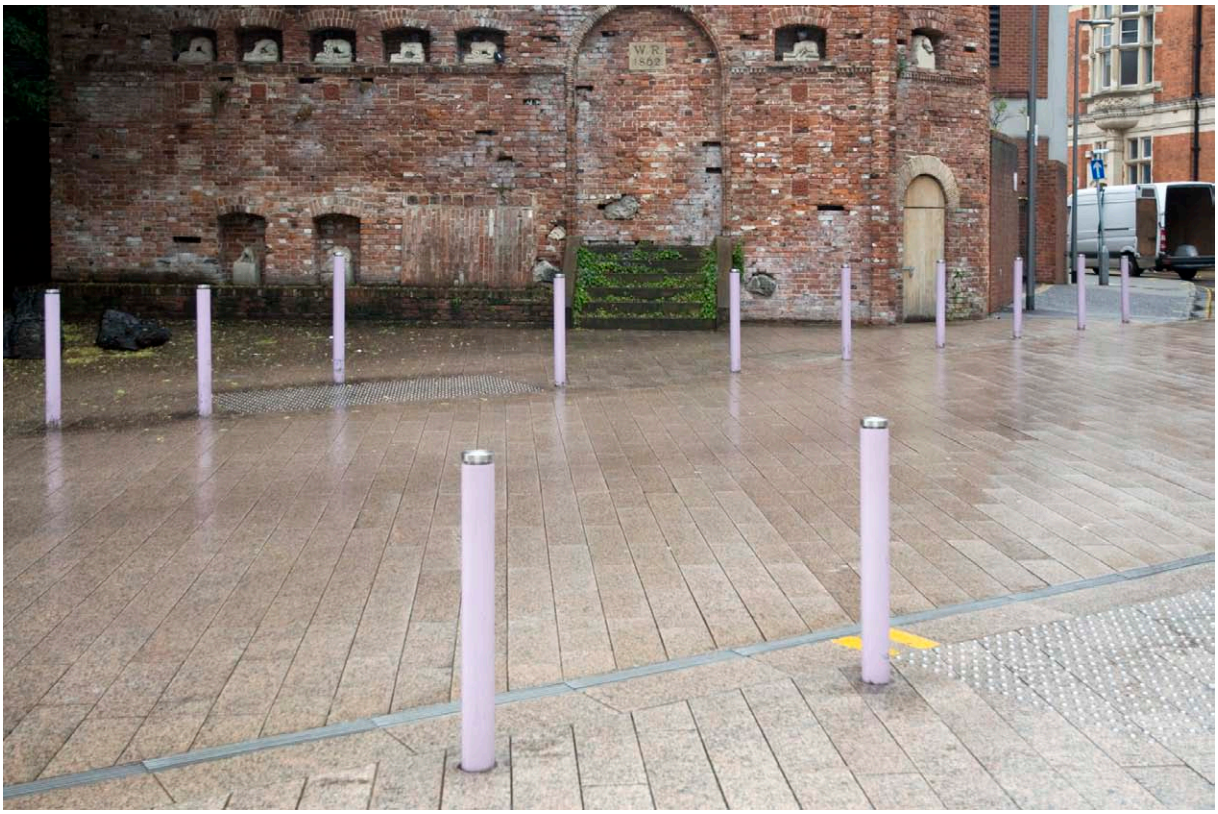
Interior of the BLC café looking out toward the Town Hall, May 2010.

Gaining trust with Paul Monaghan we could sit in meetings and propose stuff like there should be a café on the south-west corner because there wasn't a café at that corner in the original drawings. And we were able to propose it for the sake of the public realm in a way that was difficult for him to propose for the sake of the building. Those were the conversations we had over and above.

Liza Fior, INT20091026.

Plate 67

Extension of the pink granite across Clockhouse Avenue, July 2012.



From the 'Draft Item for Planning and Development Committee: Controller of Development and Technical Services Report: Barking Town Centre' document (1994) found in the archives of LBBD Regeneration:

'The Open Space in Front of the Town Hall

You can introduce more boxes with flowers and other plants, but the main thing you can do to improve this area is to change the surface by replacing the grey stones with other, brighter ones, possibly smaller ones.

(In handwriting over a photo of the old town square.) You need a centre, a focus of the place, maybe a fountain or a statue.'

Plate 68

View of the arboretum, arcade and café during the second ceremony, September 2009.

Perhaps that thing called collage was about the idea of a sort of dialogue between different spaces, and about a sameness that is inevitable when there is that much development in that short amount of time.

Liza Fior, INT20101207.

Plate 69

Chandeliers after being fitted with pigeon spikes, May 2010.

'Best in Europe: Barking Town Square will be snazzed up with Tom Dixon chandeliers.'

Viv Groskop, 'The Dougnut Burbs', *The Evening Standard*, 16 July 2008, p. 22.

Soon after their installation, the chandeliers became prime roosting places for pigeons, their droppings caking the facets of the scaled up 'diamond lights' (Tom Dixon) until metal spikes were affixed.

Plate 70

Vegetation around Town Square, November 2009.

Muf, draft notes for their 2005 report on greenery in the Town Centre, here describing their strategy for 'an exemplary small open space' at St Paul's Road (Plate 59):

'The positioning of clumps of trees is part of a wider strategy for the greening of Barking. The clumps are derived from the distinct character of green in Barking. They signal places to dwell as well as to pass through and as such, some have seats within them.

The impression of a clump is created by a collection of different species of trees that are of different heights. Rather than set into single tree pits as per Barking Code, the collection of trees would be grouped together into a single, larger, resin bound gravel pool. The resin bound gravel would be dark brown in colour, metal edged and would have an irregular, organic shape.'

Plate 71

Arcade and arboretum, August 2011.

'The new town square is designed as 4 elements where the assertion of civic grandeur combines with the unexpected intrusion of urban myth and nature.

A piazza – an extra-large open room, with a flight of steps that forms both a stage and auditorium mirroring the existing steps that lead up to the entrance of the Town Hall.

A fourth façade – a folly/memento-mori of what might have been and a warning of (sic) developments to come.

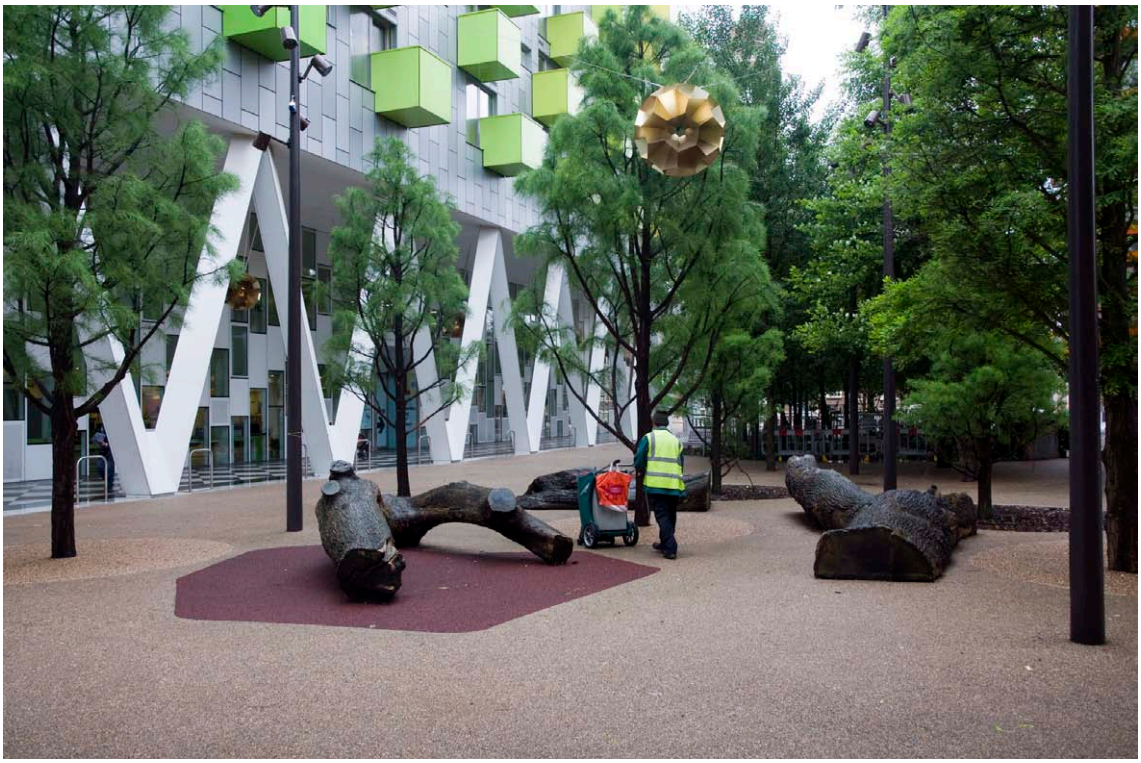
An arcade – where civic grandeur meets residential.

An arboretum – of heightened micro-ecologies that bring the unknown of nature into the rationalised order of a city square.'

Muf, 'Barking Town Square by muf architecture/art', 2008.

Plate 72

Arboretum, July 2012 (top) and August 2011 (bottom).



2.4 A MODEL TOWN SQUARE

The preceding three chapters have explored, under the concept of spatial heteroglossia, the multiple chronotopes expressive of the dialogues that produce and give meaning to the Town Square. The EPUPS, the Urban Renaissance, the LTGDC, DfL and the GLA, the 100PS programme, the High Street Network, the Barking Code, muf's conception of civic space or the interweaving spaces and times of the project, all have a particular genre, vocabulary and ideology expressing a particular vision of the Town Square, each speaking in response to past meanings and presupposing, inviting future ones. According to Bakhtinian dialogism, each of these chronotopes is subject to actions whose ambivalence implies both an ideal system and its subversion or transformation according to competing centripetal (stabilising) and centrifugal (destabilising) forces; hence the significance accorded to the act in Bakhtin's work and hence the significance that a dialogical conception of public space must accord to everyday use and management.

This chapter looks at particular experiences of fieldwork that bring to light this ambivalence of public space. These examples further support how meaning for the Town Square is to be found in the relationship between its chronotopes, the ideals these express, and how they are supported or challenged in concrete actions and experience. As my observations on site confirmed, this relationship varies according to the time of day, the day of the week, the month, the season, the year. It is always possible, then, to identify multiple chronotopes of the Town Square: early morning commuters crossing the quiet and empty Square on their way to the station; queues of people lining up at the doors of the BLC around 9am while Town Hall employees arrive; the flurry of activity around lunch time, especially in the warmer months with people eating outside on benches, at café tables, on stage or on the steps of the Folly; the busiest time of day, between 3 and 5pm, when returning school children and their parents cross the Square and most stop to play while groups are still sitting at café tables; or the quiet evenings, when few people pass through, almost never in groups, with the occasional smoker on the bench along the Gallery.[489] Depending on where and when we observe the area, our understanding of the project may vary widely. Depending on what chronotope(s) we understand these actions to stabilise or destabilise, our understanding might again differ. To paraphrase Rowan Moore and Georges Perec from the epigraphs of Chapter 7, there is indeed not one Town Square, just many Town Squares.

[489] A longer analysis of activities is given in Appendix L.

VODKA BOTTLES AND GARDEN SHEARS

The Town Square project was handed over to the LBBD in the autumn of 2010. When asked what are the most important post-handover issue to take care of, Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw usually reply something along the line of maintenance. They either go through a list of defects that need fixing: the tree-stump drinking fountain (Plate 88) or nosing on the stage's stairs; comment on the poor upkeep of the ground: people leaving rubbish that is collecting in the tree pits; or speak about the maintenance of trees and plants in the arboretum. Yet what I have in the back of my mind when I ask this question is really how use and appropriation is going to affect the product they have handed over. This seems like the logical continuation of the precepts of the project, especially given muf's related public art projects and the work of Tracey McNulty in developing long-term investment in culture as the basis for a successful public realm (this is developed in Part III). When pressed on this question, both Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw say they are satisfied with the way the Square has been appropriated by local residents and the Council. Alison jokes that 'whenever I show people around it's like you had paid people to say good things about it, you know?'[490] Liza recounts how Fred Manson had reacted to my own photograph of children singing on stage (similar to Plate 87) by saying 'that's all very well when you are taking those groups of children there, but what about when you're not?' to which Jeremy Grint had replied 'Liza was nowhere near there.' She concludes: 'This is months after muf stopped being involved. I really don't think we need to do anything ever again.'[491]

So rather than use, it is maintenance that surfaces every time the future of the project is brought up. This issue, however, is one that highlights the potential tension between the designers' aesthetic and political vision for the project and the reality of its use and management. On 18 November 2010 Liza gave a talk in Barking Town Hall. She later commented to me how the Council is not looking after the arboretum properly:

> That was bloody hilarious that day for the talk you came to. I took Jennie [Coombs] out to get the vodka bottles out. I had to climb in and collect all the rubbish. They haven't quite got to grips with that.[492]

Indeed my own impression during fieldwork, as mentioned in the previous chapter, is how maintenance issues are made more complex because no one at the Council appears to know who is supposed to be in charge of what bit of the Town Square.[493] 'Presumably', Liza continues, 'it will get better when they get these people in.' 'These people' are Council

[490] INT20100929.
[491] INT20101207. The quotes she is reporting are from a presentation she did at DfL.
[492] INT20101207.
[493] This was confirmed by Council representatives and by observations on site, see Appendix M.

workers dedicated to the maintenance of the arboretum, something Alison Crawshaw strongly fought for leading up to the handover. When I told muf I was organising a workshop with the Council they immediately pressed me to bring up the rubbish in the planted areas and a gardener for the arboretum. Eventually a gardener was hired for a fixed term of one year. Alison wrote the job description herself and made sure she would be active in teaching the Council how to care for the place before they took over maintenance. These concerns rests on the fact that contrary to the 'feral deposits' of vegetation first conceptualised (see Chapter 8), the specifications of the arboretum's planting scheme are, to quote Alison, 'really exact.'[494] Each tree, plant and shrub is carefully located. This is a crucial conflict behind the dialogue of maintenance and use. Whether it is the planting scheme, the specifications or the vision for appropriation, the Town Square scheme suggests a specific aesthetic and ethic of public space that may not match actual use and maintenance. Good use and maintenance are those that reinforce this particular vision (children singing on stage, playing on the fallen trees, people sitting and chatting, people drinking coffee, gardening) while practices that challenge this vision are dismissed as problematic behaviour (scattering of rubbish, not picking up rubbish, unkempt shrubs and trees).[495]

The precision of the arboretum's planting scheme appears to run against muf's own recommendation for 'ease of maintenance' in the Barking Code.[496] Ease of maintenance is brought up by muf when speaking of their design, and while the parvis is, in all respect, easy to maintain, the arboretum demands much greater care. Peter Andrews, for example, doubted whether its design was appropriate since most people 'would not pay a great deal of respect.'[497] This might be especially sensitive when it comes to what Alison calls the 'magical aspects of the design': for example, the colour of lights changing with the seasons and exact planting.[498] It appears that the natural element of the scheme, first imagined as a counter to the hardscapes of the civic square and the arcade, turns out to be the area that requires most care, most supervision and the greatest deal of respect. Even when it includes elements that are, supposedly, counterpoints to the concept of the civic, the

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[494] INT20100929.

[495] Liza and Alison have different views on some of these points. Liza, for example, is interested by the 'what if' suggestion of seeing the arboretum grow wild and unkempt or appropriated by local residents who might overhaul the planting scheme; but Alison, as Liza puts it, would be 'heartbroken' would the planting scheme be overhauled or let to run its course—hence her insistence on securing the gardener. The discussion on the balustrades in Chapter 3.3 will again bring up this conflict.

[496] Muf architecture/art, 'The Barking Code'.

[497] INT20100726.

[498] INT20100929. From my fieldnotes (FN20100511): [Paul from Ardmore] says Alison came yesterday to plant with the guys. She wanted to make sure the filters were in the spot lights. What filters? These orange filters that in the autumn will give a certain light and react with the trees. He says she made no sense at all. He doesn't get it (and obviously thinks it's absolutely superfluous).

projection of the designers remains within certain boundaries—boundaries that are as fragile as they are exact. While Alison believes the introduction of care for the place should 'filter into the general public' and instil a sense of ownership[499], Liza goes further by evaluating the success of the project on their ability to introduce a 'culture of care':

> If there is a decrease in love and care, for example if the vodka bottles piled up, it would be a failure on our part. The danger of that is that if people don't see the vodka bottles (like Jennie didn't) then we failed in a way.[500]

Thus the Town Square project does not escape the implications of a propositional stance *vis-à-vis* the social *bienséance* of its intended (and invented) publics.

THE TOWN SQUARE BRAND

For the Council the question of use and maintenance appears to balance between two positions: official branding and unofficial appropriation. The paradox is that on the one hand the Council wants to own the Town Square and monitor use and maintenance in accordance to their projected image (the Council's brand), while on the other it wants to encourage unofficial appropriation and use so that the local population identifies with the Town Square (that it becomes their own). Not only is this paradoxical position problematic and difficult to manage, but it leads to tense and ironic situations like library staff being expelled from the market (showing ambivalence on use within the Council itself), or the Kosovar women's dance being shut down at Vicarage Field (impromptu appropriation by residents without proper permission).[501] Management, as we saw, does not cut across the field of the Town Centre or the Town Square. So unofficial appropriation, even temporary and within acceptable behaviour, is always subjected to permission.[502]

On 21 September 2010 I organised a workshop on public space and the Town Square for the local authorities partly meant to test the Council's position with respect to use and maintenance. The initiative was strongly supported by Nazeem Ullah who insisted we get the backing of Jeremy Grint and Paul Hogan and arranged for the four of us to

[499] INT20100929.
[500] INT20101207.
[501] From FN20100518: At the REC, Sheila and Myrvete tell me about the day the Kosovar women went to dance in the Vicarage Field foyer. They took unpaid leave, put on their traditional dress and walked in. The group didn't have proper permission so somebody called the police and the manager came to ask them to shut down their recorded music. They were told they could keep going and parade in their dress but without music. 'Humiliating', says Myrvete.
[502] From the point of view of the police, Commander Matt Bell says that on Council-owned property like the Town Square it is left to the discretion of the police whether an action, an event or behaviour is ruled to 'disturb the peace (INT20100809).'

meet.[503] During this initial meeting there was a strong push to create a 'sense of ownership' for the local authorities as well as for local residents. Jeremy Grint supported Alison's push for a gardener exactly for the sense of ownership this might create. But Paul Hogan commented how this needed to happen without the orchestration of the Borough and that activities on the Square could not be overly prescribed. Residents need to be proud of it, he added. 'There is something of the Big Society in this!' ironized Jeremy as our meeting ended.

During the actual workshop[504] the discussion followed similar lines, revolving around two prominent themes: definition, including branding and marketing; and use, organised or informal. The first theme emerged from the discussion while the second was more formally introduced as part of a small group activity. The two played out against each other because, on the one hand, the participants recognised that the Town Square needed to 'be its own entity' and have clear branding (the Council needed to make this happen by turning it into a venue with a clear identity), while on the other, they also supported opening up the space to local resident appropriation (so the branding had to be done in such a way that invited other uses).[505] They liked the idea of residents taking charge and ownership of the place so that use could not be heavily prescribed by the Council.

Bandstand to go

BARKING Town Centre's landmark bandstand will be removed to make way for a new bus route, the POST can reveal.

The well known structure will be dismantled piece by piece and rebuilt in St Chad's Park, Chadwell Heath.

It has to be moved from its current location, the junction of East Street and Ripple Road, to make way for the new East London Transit (ELT) route.

The bus will link the proposed development at Barking Riverside with Barking and Ilford Town Centres.

Transport for London and Barking and Dagenham Council have been in talks with the Friends of St Chad's Park to find an alternative home for the bandstand.

It is expected to be dismantled when work on the ELT begins in January and will either be erected in the park straight away or put into storage and put up at a later date.

Chadwell Heath Cllr Terry Justice said: "It's very welcome news and would be a nice addition to the park."

He also called for the council to attract musicians and bands by allowing them to use it for free.

Figure 44. Announcement of the demolition of the bandstand in the *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 22 October 2008, p.25.

But this brought up one of the most interesting points with regards to what might be called 'acceptable appropriation'. Many local residents had spoken positively about the bandstand that used to be at Blake's Corner (removed for the ELT route in 2008, Figure 44). While

[503] The goal was to have two workshops, one with representative from the local authority and another with local residents. When I later tried to organise the second workshop, Nazeem had left the Council. However, I was later able to organise two separate workshops, one with the Urban Design Forum and another with the Youth Forum.

[504] For a list of participants in the workshop, see Appendix M.

[505] A lengthy but telling exchange between participants on how to define the space of the Town Square can be found in Appendix M.

they agreed it was underused as a stage, they all recognised it as an important landmark.[506] As Sumeyra Mor says, the bandstand 'was a meeting point for lots of people. "Let's meet at the bandstand." Or, if you were giving directions, it was "turn right from the bandstand."'[507] When I brought it up as an example in the workshop, Lorraine Pulham was quick to correct:

> The bandstand wasn't the focal point of Barking. It was a nightmare to manage because it was full of people drinking every day. It became a no-go area for people who wanted to use it.[508]

Activities, then, could not be too prescribed, but still had to be coordinated and managed to avoid improper appropriation (the bandstand, it turns out, was officially used only about twice a year due to budgetary constraints). Linking the example back to public space, Zoinul Abidin comments:

> I suppose that the challenge is in the sense that when you have a public open space, and if you don't have proper animation, if you don't have stuff on, then after a while, five years, couple of years down the line it becomes similar to the bandstand.[509]

The solution, as participants then discussed in circular fashion, is proper branding. But even that, they agreed, comes at a cost: if the Town Square is associated with the Council as a civic square then anything that happens on it reflects back on the local authorities. And so the content of activities has to be closely monitored. The catch of promoting the place as an 'open space' first is that it is impossible to do so in isolation from the surrounding buildings and the institutions they represent. The Council inevitably gets tied up in the production of the Square. Neither is it possible to brand the place locally without affecting the chronotopes expressed by the project at the European, national or London levels. That is, the Town Square has already been branded multiple times before under the aesthetics and politics of a series of other authorities: CCCB, LTGDC, GLA, AUU… By seemingly occupying a paradoxical position between giving the place a strong identity and allowing residents to make it their own, those discussing the future use and management of the Town Square are emphasising the inevitable ambivalence between systemic thinking (branding) and its subversion in the everyday, adding their voices to a dialogue already charged with the ideas of others.

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[506] INT20091002A, INT20091002B, INT20100223, INT20100420A, INT20091202, INT20100517, and INT20100420B.
[507] INT20100420A. The same expression 'meet me at the bandstand' was also given by Naomi, INT20100420C.
[508] WRK20100921.
[509] WRK20100921.

EXTRAORDINARY ACTIONS

When I questioned my interviewees about possible uses of the Town Square, most appeared at a loss about what to answer. Why answer sitting on a bench, having lunch, walking by, looking at trees, resting, or any answer that may seem obvious? It seems as though everyday use is common sense—rather than functional—and extraordinary events are those organised by the Council. I have to push for answers, or give some of my own before interviewees open up to the possibility of meaningful action. For example, local resident Nils changed his attitude to the stage in our interview from 'an ugly raised area' to a possible place for local bands to perform and 'the place to be on a Friday night.'[510] The idea that the space may be used creatively, with a claim as to the meaning of the place, more often seems to be a conceit of design professionals and academics. Yet it is exactly because everyday uses and events are not extraordinary that they are significant. That is, everyday uses may have repercussions on the maintenance and politics of the Square, even if they are not consciously political or dissident, because they imply an ambivalent position between authority and lived experience, between monologue and dialogue. The play between control and freedom of use which is so overwhelmingly evident in the development of places such as Hyde Park's Speakers Corner[511] occurs even at the level of simple everyday actions. Throwing your empty vodka bottle into one of the 'fragile ecologies' is as much a subversive statement, albeit unintended, as the assertion of the concept of the feral over the civic; although both actions rely on widely varying means.

Even taking a simple action like sitting raises issues. Benches and sitting were brought up by many informants as soon as they started speaking about public space, talking about the appropriation of Vicarage Field benches by Sikh men[512], commenting that public space before the regeneration of the Town Centre amounted to parks and a few benches[513], or commenting that there are too few benches on the Town Square. According to Liza Fior, the Council had been anxious during the design phase of the project about the number of benches to include. Their worry, she says, was that if benches were provided people would loiter.[514] And while benches were eventually provided (and branded by muf and DfL as 'the Barking bench'[515]), the anxiety of the Council toward such simple acts as gathering, sitting and loitering shows how fine the line is between everyday actions and

[510] INT20091202.
[511] See John Michael Roberts, 'Expressive Free Speech, the State and the Public Sphere: a Bakhtinian–Deleuzian Analysis of "Public Address" at Hyde Park', Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social, Cultural and Political Protest, 7 (2008), 101.
[512] Sheila Delaney, INT20100517B; Verona Tucker, INT20100420B.
[513] Denise Lovelace, INT20100218.
[514] INT20101207.
[515] The Barking bench is often brought up by designers as a success of the Barking Code. Its regular bench-like aesthetics are celebrated in contrast to the reported anxiety of the Council with loitering.

challenges to authority.[516] While some of the illicit behaviour I witnessed on the Square did take place next to the Folly (drinking, urinating), the benches in the civic square and the arboretum still provided the best places to witness the ambivalence of use: a conversation about BNP politics next to mothers and children from visible minorities, pot smoking in the evening, rubbish scattered around the long bench in the arboretum in the morning, or South Asian women chatting next to a group of Lithuanian men drinking during the day (Plate 76).

Play has also had great effect on the conception of the Town Square. It simultaneously reinforced certain aspirations of the designers and of the central government in creating a playable landscape (Margaret Hodge: '…I imagine some very interesting play here!'[517]), as well as certain fears of the same designers, developers, development agencies or the Council when it comes to maintenance (especially in the arboretum) and controlled behaviour (skateboarding, cycling or playing ball games on the Square). This ambivalence played out strongly when a group of teenagers cycled onto the Square, soon followed by a police officer on bicycle. They stopped at the bench in front of the Town Hall, along with the police officer, and some of them did bicycle tricks as the others looked on in what amounted to a closely monitored use of the 'playable landscape'. And yet even more seemingly benign actions, this time children running through the arboretum, have effects on the production of the space and the relative stability of its chronotopes. Here both aspirations (having children play) and fears (damage to planting) are played out (see also Chapter 12):

> A boy climbs down and through the balustrade and walks through the shrubs. One boy runs from the direction of Tesco, runs over the fallen trees, runs right through the shrubs behind me out and in the other wooded area: a perfect diagonal through the space. A group of four or five kids come to the fallen trees and play on them for a few minutes. One girl tries to climb one of the pines. They then move to the small chair, some sitting on it, some walking right through the balustrade without ducking. Meanwhile, kids are also running up and down the stage ramp and stairs, climbing the small sloping ground on it side.[518]

Other actions further tie the open space of the Town Square with its surrounding buildings. After all, one of the strongest implications of the design and conception of the place, also expressed in some of its major chronotopes (Urban Renaissance and 100PS, for example), is that the Town Square can only be as successful as the buildings that surround it since

[516] The discussion on the old bandstand is a point in case: yes the project for the ELT sealed the deal, but improper use and loitering made the decision to remove it much easier.
[517] Liza Fior reporting what Margaret Hodge had said to her on their stroll through the arboretum during the September 2009 ceremony (INT20091026).
[518] FN20100521.

one cannot be conceived without the other. Spatial heteroglossia at Town Square is contingent on what activities and uses these buildings and other spaces generate. The mitigated success of retail space on the ground floors of Barking Central is thus certainly an issue as is the way these negotiate the threshold between inside and outside by either being allowed to put tables outside or having longer opening hours. The space of the Square was drastically transformed, for example, when the Tulip café moved its closing hour back from 7pm to 4pm on weekdays and stopped opening altogether over the weekend.[519] My visit to the site in August 2011 shows how the space of the Town Square has also changed because of modifications in the BLC. The Gallery, which was usually full of students doing their homework and other people reading or resting, was now empty of tables, chairs and seats (Plate 77) so that one of the main visual connections between the civic square and the activity of the BLC was cut off.[520] The interior connection between the Barking Apprentice and the BLC lobby was walled off (Plate 78) so that you could now only access the café from the Town Square and the fluid circulation between the three spaces was cut off. Finally, the arboretum entrance to the BLC (facing the One-Stop-Shop) had been disabled so that the building now only had one entrance off the civic square (Plate 79). Zoinul Abidin, who was now director of both Libraries and BLC and who had strongly supported creating links to the Square, justified the closure as a reduction of reception points (and thus security) and because the One-Stop-Shop staff complained about drafts. A simple action, closing a door, has now affected the space of the Town Square by destabilising possible relationships between adjacent spaces.

As this chapter has shown, every conception of public space raises issues about the way the relationship between design and use is negotiated. In other words, every conception of public space requires a certain 'policing of boundaries': between the civic and the feral, gardening and drinking, official branding and unofficial appropriation, the assertion of civilised behaviour over uncivilised behaviour, or still in the way certain mundane actions imply anxiety and subversion or fundamentally transform socio-spatial relationships. Thinking public space dialogically suggests that these boundaries are rather fluid and porous, that public space is continuously produced by the interaction of a multitude of different voices, intentions or actions. Not that boundary maintenance does not exist, but that public space has to be understood as the result of an interaction that stabilises and/or destabilises boundaries. Design proposals (as all conceptions) for the

[519] When the BLC café changed to the Barking Apprentice, closing time came back to 7pm, but since business seems to be as difficult as it was for the Tulip this may not be the case for long.
[520] Denise Lovelace, when I saw her in August 2011, suggested that the decision had been taken because students did not respect the 'extraordinary circumstance' of the space being open to them, that they usually left it in a mess, and that there may have been a fight.

public realm are valued propositions that suggest a particular transformation of aesthetic, ethical, social and political relations through the ordering and transformation of spatial relations. No design, no conception, and therefore no dialogue creating public space can be neutral. The maintenance of boundaries arises inevitably since these non-neutral dialogues are the projection of something that, in effect, never fully corresponds to reality.

Figure 45. Area in front of Town Hall circa 1999 with the 1974 library at centre. Source: Town Square competition document from LBBD

In Barking, for example, an open space is cleared through gradual shifts in the morphology of the Town Centre and then consecrated as a Town Square (Figure 45). This conception, as Jamie Dean comments, feels 'slightly manufactured' because it runs up against the 'natural morphology' of the town[521] and, we might add, the actions of individuals and publics. Indeed, the public actions I witnessed in the Town Centre were for the great majority located around Blake's Corner: political candidates handing out leaflets, library outreach (Plate 20), religious groups reading aloud (Plate 63), a clash between BNP supporters and young men chanting 'no hate in Barking', or Richard Barnbrook's alleged horse stunt during St George's day. I agree with most local residents who say that if someone or a group of people is looking to reach others then Blake's Corner, not Town Square, is the logical place to be. The idea for the Square, in this sense, is part wishful thinking because the assumptions and values that support it are not necessarily reconcilable with its concrete reality in Barking and at this time in history. As a wish-image, it has to be maintained and manufactured against socio-spatial production that might devalue it. But it is also as a wish-image that the Town Square stands apart and should be recognised; it raises questions of purpose, function and meaning more acutely than similar projects by straying close to a model town square. The relationship between the ideals projected by its chronotopes at all levels and the realities of use and maintenance is exactly what defines public space as an ambivalent dialogue. In Part III of this thesis, attention shifts to practical means by which the ambivalence of both publics and public space is negotiated in design.

[521] INT20100418. See also Appendix I and Appendix U.

Plate 73

Early morning in the arboretum with leftover rubbish, April 2010.

'A group of school children sat on bench next to me eating a McDonald's. They then leave me with their rubbish and amble through the alley...

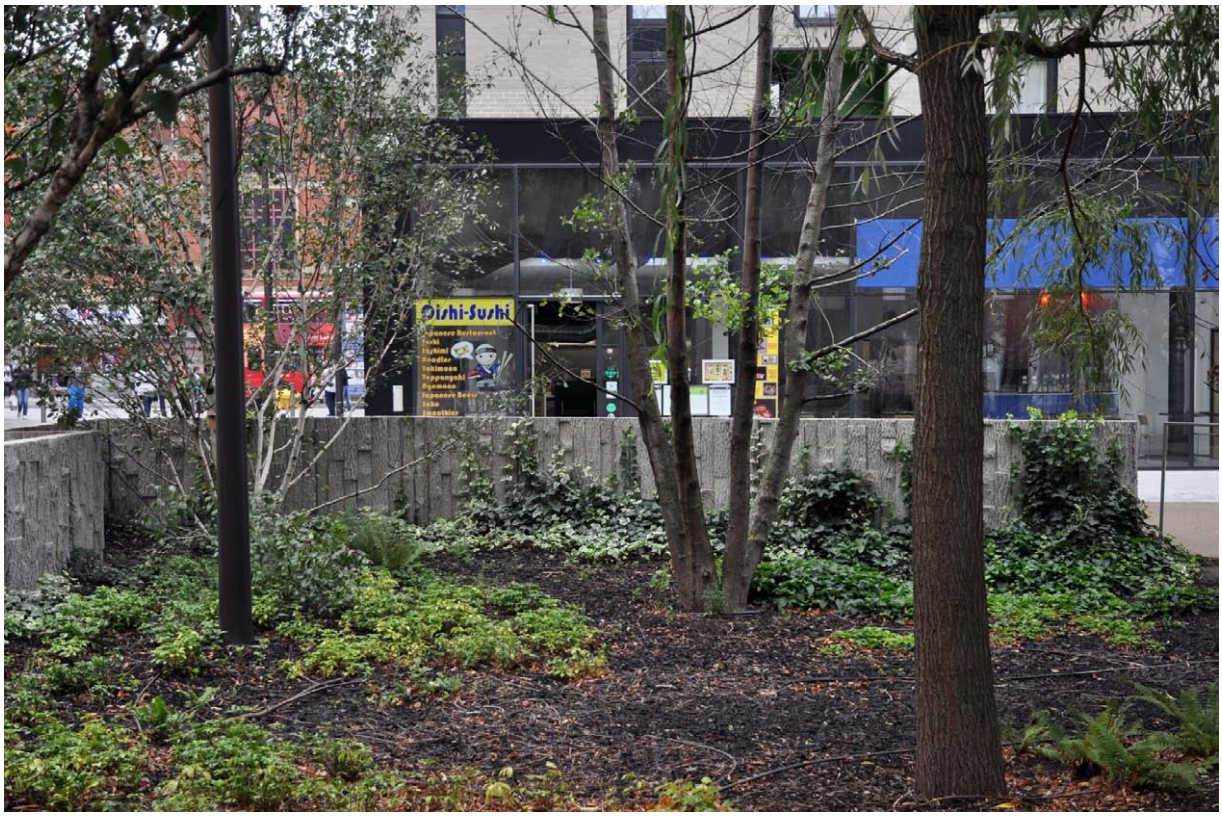
Lots of loitering within the alley. Not intimidating, it's almost sociable. There are a lot of people who know each other, and their sons and their mothers...

More mums. Lots of shoppers and kids. Lots of tracksuits.'

Excerpt from muf's fieldnotes on 4 February 2005, 4:35pm to 5:30pm.

Plate 74

View through one of the 'fragile ecologies' looking toward the Lemonade tower, August 2011.



TBK: What if we let weeds grow? Or the residents take care of it but plant whatever they want?

Liza Fior: I think Alison would be heartbroken.

TBK: Would you?

LF: Would I be? I'll think about that. That would be a funny photo to make with plants growing all over the place.

INT20101207.

Plate 75

Secret Garden, April 2010.

On the square two men are interviewing someone I will later recognise as Dominic Carman, Liberal Democrat candidate for Barking. This is the first of several camera crews I will see during the day. The square is sunny and there are lots of people from all ages and from what seems like every ethnic background. Kids playing. Two men from Town Hall walk to the tree stump fountain and check that it's indeed not working. There are flowers attached to one of the trees in the Secret Garden as though somebody died there. There is a notice in the windows of the Bath House reading 'coming soon, Barking Apprentice, restaurant, bar, bakery'.

FN20100413.

Plate 76

Arboretum bench, August 2011.

The Lithuanian men who seem to be already drunk are also enjoying posing for me. As soon as I ask, G starts posing. He then wants a portrait with his friend. He's lived in Barking for 4 years. In Lithuania, he says, there are no jobs, 'no nothing.' 'Better here.' I don't know if he works here. He's very friendly. Shakes my hand when I leave.

FN20110824.

Plate 77

BLC Gallery, August 2011

Site visit August 2011.
Surprised to find the gallery emptied of tables and chairs with not a single student doing homework.

The note on the far column reads:

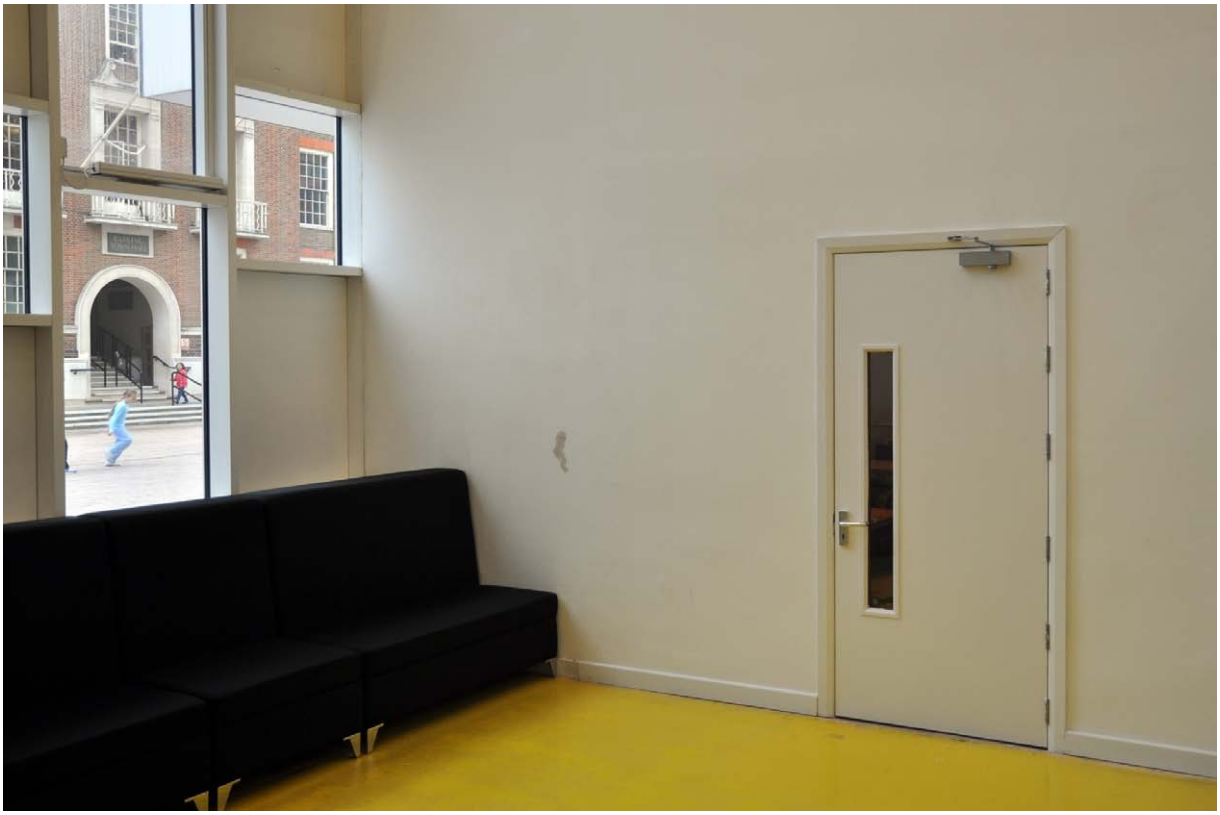
'Please note the gallery
is not for use
as a study area

We apologise for the inconvenience

PLEASE DO NOT
TOUCH
THE ARTWORK'

Plate 78

Closed-off access to the café from the BLC, August 2011



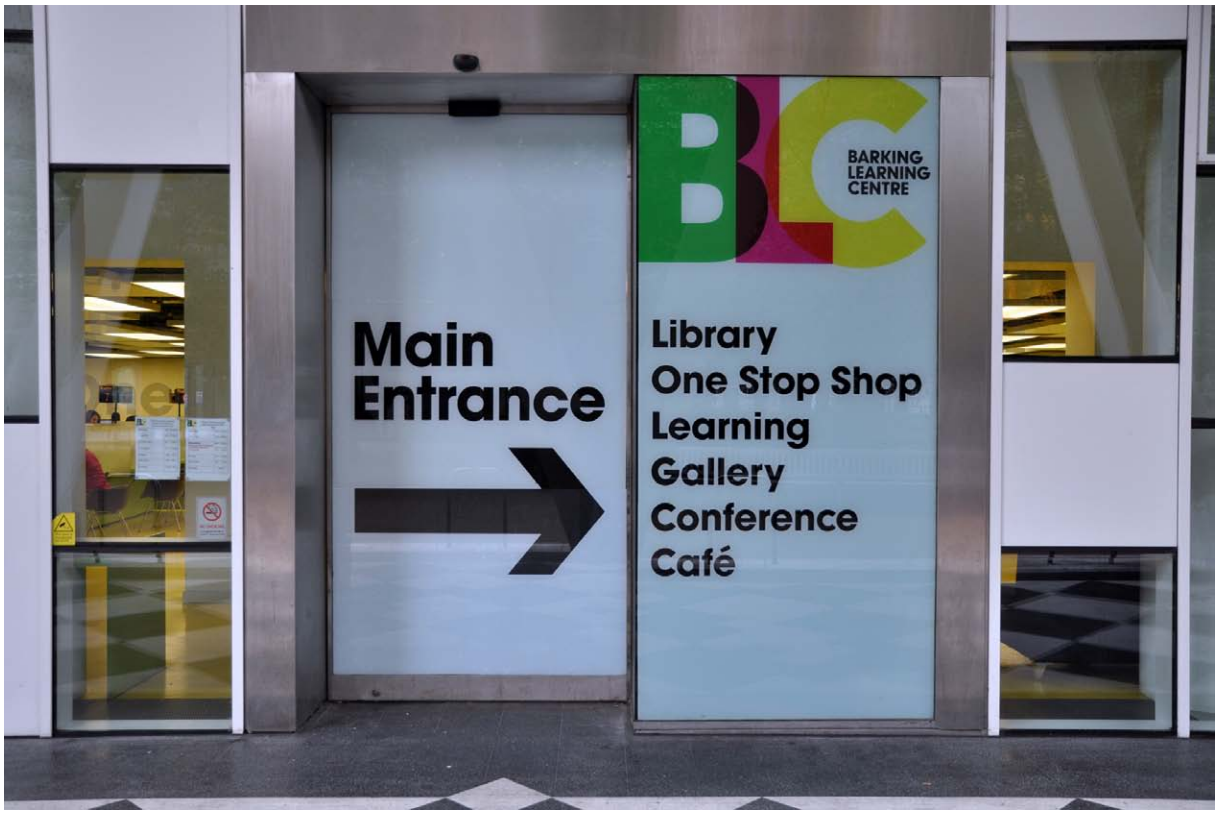
The Barking Apprentice is not in the Bath House building but has taken the place of the Tulip Café. They painted the inside columns red and boarded off the direct interior access to the BLC with a white gypsum wall and a single fire door.

14:00. Tea with Denise Lovelace. She prefers (or suggests) we go into the staff room for tea rather than the café, but only after I say we would have to go around 'that damn wall.' She agrees it was nice to have that access before. 'The café used to be part of the building but now it's really just separated.'

FN20110824.

Plate 79

Closed west entrance to the BLC, August 2011



While waiting for the Urban Design Forum to arrive Zoinul walks by and we chat. He is now Director of all libraries in the Borough and of the BLC. He says that he is getting an interior designer in to redo the interior of the BLC. They are removing the yellow floor as part of deficiencies (Ardmore pays). I ask him if Paul Monaghan is going to be involved. He asks: 'Who?' The architect who designed the building. 'No!' He laughs and says that architects are good for the exterior of buildings, but not interiors. They need a designer who does commercial retail surfaces. Funny he does not mention a library specialist.

FN20111207.

Plate 80

Redrow marketing model for Barking Central after its relocation to the BLC gallery, August 2011.

'Buyers are warned that this is a working model... The contents of the model may be subject to change at any time and alterations or variations can occur during the progress of the works without revision to the model. ...Nor do the content of this model constitute a contract, part of any contract or warranty.'

'Warning to house purchasers' notice posted on the Barking Central model.

Part III

PRACTICAL AMBIVALENCE

Figure 46. Elephant at Blake's Corner, date unknown. Source: Valence House

3.1 A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

> By virtue of its orientation towards the specific, art expresses and preserves plural participative activity in the face of abstraction and indifference.
>
> Tim Beasley-Murray, *Michael Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin*[522]

> The commissioning culture has to change from 'let's commission some art' to 'let's work with some artists.' By commissioning artists you are asking for creative responses and ideas you hadn't thought of. If your brief is very specific, then you really just need to hire a technician.
>
> Tracey McNulty[523]

GOLDEN THREADS

At the opening ceremony for phase one of the Barking Town Square in September 2007, an invited audience sat on gold chairs listening to speeches (Figure 47) while gold chandeliers hung from the newly constructed arcade.

Figure 47. Gold chairs at first ceremony, September 2007. Photo: David Williams

This was not the first time gold had marked transformation at Town Square. Exactly seven years before the opening ceremony, Shelagh Wakely's installation *Golden Carpet* covered a large area in front of Barking Town Hall in reflective bronze dust to give the ground the appearance of gold (Figure 48).[524] The installation heralded the recently announced development project for the Town Square, the same project whose first phase would be marked seven years later by muf's interventions. Chairs, chandeliers and carpet suggest, in addition to celebration, that the possible tension brought about by the regeneration of the

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[522] *Mikhail Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin : Experience and Form* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 124.
[523] Quoted in Vivien Lovell, 'Commissioning Guidelines', *Public art online*, 2008 <http://www.publicartonline.org.uk/resources/practicaladvice/commissioning/modusoperandi_guidelines.php> [accessed 10 August 2012].
[524] *Golden Carpet* was installed during London Open House 2000. 'A Pool Within the Golden Carpet for Barking Town Hall Square, London', *Axis: the online resource for contemporary art*, 2000 <http://www.axisweb.org/artwork.aspx?WORKID=22865> [accessed 21 September 2011].

Town Centre can be alleviated by the introduction of something special, luxurious and missing, as it were, from that particular place: a gold lining. As Fenna Wagenaar implied in our interview, 'gold chandeliers' and 'expensive materials' appeal to people who may otherwise be dismayed by the aesthetics of the AHMM buildings.[525]

Figure 48. *Golden Carpet* installation at Town Square in 2000. Source: Shelagh Wakely

In this chapter, the prologue to Part III, we follow the thread of these interventions back to the conditions that made them possible: the meeting, in Barking, of policies and practices predicated on the dialogue between art, architecture and planning. This sets the scene for the development, in the next three chapters, of a dialogical framework for design that builds on the practical implications of Bakhtin's theory.

BRIEF FOR UNCERTAINTY

Golden Carpet, rather than a singular event, was an integral part of the development for the Town Square. Shelagh Wakely was the artist member of the UC and Avery team who had 'struck gold in Barking'[526] by winning the Town Square competition in January 2000. The brief of the competition specifically called for multi-disciplinary teams that included a professional artist.[527] As Jeremy Grint recalls, the Borough's art consultant was involved in drafting the brief so that it 'looked very different to what the Council had done before.' 'In a way', he thought, 'the way it was structured had more to do with the public art consultant than the architecture.'[528] And so the document puts a lot of emphasis on the role of art, dedicating a whole section on the role of the artist(s) in the project team. It states that the Council would 'take into account the quality and impact of the artist's contribution in

[525] INT20091021B
[526] Deborah Singmaster, 'Avery Strikes Gold in Barking Town Square', *The Architect's Journal*, 16 March 2000.
[527] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Development and Architectural Design Competition Barking Town Square'.
[528] INT20101104.

determining the outcome of the competition' and provided a list of potential contributions.[529]

In addition to the overall architectural and development proposal, each team had to present an idea for a temporary artistic event that would draw attention to the future development. The brief is quite precise as to the nature of the event and calls for a project that will aim to be a 'catalyst to encourage and promote debate around the future Town Square', a project that is 'inspirational and exciting in its own right', a project that will 'enable the client to host discussions on the form of the space' and that will 'promote reactions' to the proposed scheme, and finally a project that will 'enable design teams to be experimental and progressive.'[530] It is rather unclear how *Golden Carpet* responds to this call, but nevertheless it is within these wishes for the temporary art event that the most interesting definition of public space is found:

> Of particular interest is the potential of the square as a useable and welcoming public space, and the nature of the types of places people enjoy or spend time in. The work may well consist of a number of conflicting treatments—it could be slightly uncomfortable, even paradoxical but with a sense of potential that makes one want to explore the possibilities that it appears to forecast. The result of numbers of people collaborating may well be a collision of several people's thoughts and ideas so that rather than one coherent idea, several competing and conflicting physical landscapes may be produced that each attempt to entice the viewer. These may overlap, be continuous or sequential. In particular, the project could engage with a number of groups or constituencies who have links with the site to involve them in the formulation and possibly the fabrication or performance of the work.[531]

Written in 1999, the description closely resembles, as we will later see, what could be a blueprint for the future development of the Town Square by muf and the involvement of the LBBD ACD department. It is through art, in this case, that links are established between a proposal for the Square and dialogue and participation. Quite tellingly, the comment about the potential of the area as a 'useable and welcoming public space' is followed by comments that emphasise potential conflict, paradox, discomfort, collision, and competition. There is a recognised potential, then, in public space as a site of co-existing contradictions both social ('collision of several people's thoughts') and spatial ('conflicting physical landscapes'). Or, to frame it according to Bakhtin's theory, there is a recognised potential in a dialogical approach to public space both as a site and as a

[529] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Development and Architectural Design Competition Barking Town Square'. These included influence on the overall concept, the form and massing of the scheme, the form, function and usability of public spaces, and the use of light and colour.
[530] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Development and Architectural Design Competition Barking Town Square'.
[531] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Development and Architectural Design Competition Barking Town Square', pp. 3.7–3.8.

production of ambivalence. Furthermore, the potential for art projects to structure public engagement is emphasised: these are an opportunity to engage with groups who would normally not be involved in the design and development process apart from standard consultation on planning applications.

The principles of collaboration between art, planning and architecture are carried through into the 2004 brief for the Town Square—which also calls for an artist to be engaged as part of the consultant team—albeit on different terms. Here, the lexicon of conflict and opposition of the 1999 brief is replaced by language emphasising cultural heritage and identity. Evident from my interview with Tracey McNulty, who was hired in 2001 as Head of the ACD, the role of art in the dialogue of regeneration is made more precise: every artist working in the Town Centre had to

> make the heritage of the place seem more tangible, more visible, at a stage where it was undergoing massive regeneration and in a sense heritage was being eradicated.[532]

Public art, then, is asked to 'create a sense of identity' and 'interpret local history and culture'.[533] In describing the benefits of a collaborative approach the brief again suggests that public art is not about the integration of art works into the public realm, but rather about designing the public realm in collaboration with artists through 'subtle interventions'.[534] While the 2004 brief does not explicitly mention it, the actions of the ACD at the same time show continued support for public engagement through its public art programme and closer ties with planning and regeneration. Engagement, as Tracey McNulty would comment in our interview, is not about making a particular piece of art more appreciated, but about insuring that 'creative culture is part of the collective sense of place.'[535] The hope is that this in turn inflects the processes of design and regeneration.

INTO POLICY

In 1996 the LBBD launched its A13 Artscape project, an extensive public art programme closely tied to its regeneration policies. Supported by the largest UK Arts Council grant ever attributed to a local authority (£3.95m), the programme included installations along the A13 highway as well as projects 'apart from the road' like Scrattons Farm, which was muf's first project in the Borough.[536] At the time, the Artscape significantly expressed the

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[532] Tracey McNulty, INT20091019.
[533] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.
[534] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.
[535] INT20091019.
[536] Jeremy Grint and Claire Adams, 'A13 Artscape', *Resource for Urban Design Information* <http://www.rudi.net/books/12074> [accessed 7 November 2010]; London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'A13 Project', *London Borough of Barking and Dagenham*, 2010

chronotopes of a continued relationship—in official policy—between public art, architecture and planning started in the 1980s.[537]

The Town Square emerged from two distinct programmes: the Artscape, whose mandate called for the creation of a public space in front of Town Hall[538], and a separate plan devised with consultants Urbed for a mixed-use development on the same site. Their overlap, as Jeremy Grint explained in our interview, led to the 1999 brief.[539] As evidenced above, the influence of the Artscape was significant for two reasons: first, the programme consciously attempted to bridge the divide between development and art by the sustained collaboration between civil engineers, planners and artists; and second, it supported the idea that art projects could also alleviate tensions between urban development and existing local communities. Public art commissions were thus to play an integral part in the development of urban design and architectural projects, as with the Town Square, rather than being mere additions to an already completed product.

The presence of an arts consultant in the Borough in the mid-1990s and the later hiring of Tracey McNulty are examples of embedding public art advocacy within the Borough's departments. As recently as 2010, Pollock and Paddisson argue that, even given support in policy, public art is still struggling to find a permanent position within local authorities due to factors of funding, visibility, and the relationship between policy, process and public.[540] To this we might also add those critiques (also present in policy documents) directed at the effectiveness for public art to have any benefits beyond aesthetic value.[541] The integration of artists in the planning process, Pollock and Paddisson conclude, has to

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<http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/LeisureArtsAndLibraries/Arts/A13/Pages/A13Project.aspx> [accessed 20 October 2011].

[537] See Cameron Cartiere, Rosemary Shirley and Shelly Willis, 'A Timeline for the History of Public Art: The United Kingdom and the United States of America, 1900-2005', in *The Practice of Public Art*, ed. by Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis (London: Routledge, 2008); Cameron Cartiere, 'Coming in From the Cold: a Public Art History', in *The Practice of Public Art*, ed. by Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis (London: Routledge, 2008). Examples of milestones include Actions for Cities act of parliament (1988), Percent-for-Art programme from the Arts Council (late 1980s), Art for Architecture by the Royal Society (1991-2004), Policy Studies Institute report on the benefits of public art (1995), the Sustainable Communities Plan (2003), and Culture at the Heart of Regeneration by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (2004). It is striking though that policy documents do not appear to mention the transformative potential of public art on publics themselves or on the participants in the development process. Political and social aspects of public art are central to its discourse in theory, criticism or practice (see Chapter 3.2) and should be as relevant to official attempts at linking public art with urban development and regeneration. In fact, these aspects are what ultimately give weight to the idea of locating participation, engagement and criticality in the overlap between art, architecture and planning.

[538] The A13 Artscape had been extended or duplicated into the Town Centre Artscape. Grint and Adams; London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'A13 Project'.

[539] INT20101104.

[540] Venda Louise Pollock and Ronan Paddison, 'Embedding Public Art: Practice, Policy and Problems', *Journal of Urban Design*, 15 (2010), 335–356 <doi:10.1080/13574809.2010.487810>.

[541] T. Hall and I. Robertson, 'Public Art and Urban Regeneration: Advocacy, Claims and Critical Debates', *Landscape Research*, 26 (2001), 5–26; Graeme Evans and Phyllida Shaw, *The Contribution of Culture to Regeneration in the UK: A Report to the Department for Culture Media and Sport* (London Metropolitan University, January 2004); Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS), 'Culture at the Heart of Regeneration' (DCMS, 2004).

be continuously justified through, in some instances, the presence of an advocate for public art in planning or regeneration departments—exactly Tracey McNulty's task with the ACD.

Tracey McNulty got involved in the Artscape project in 2001. At the time, as she recalls, most of the commissions had already been allocated, but on an *ad hoc* basis, and her role was to claim back some ownership over the entire process for the Borough. Given the dual nature of the Artscape as a transportation infrastructure project and a public art programme, her team was joined by Council civil engineer Peter Watson. Together they managed 'how the artists worked with the engineers, how the public understood what the artists were doing and made sure the Council understood what was happening.'[542] Their collaboration was crucial in seeing most of the Town Centre Artscape projects to completion, a collaboration whose success Tracey McNulty qualifies as 'uncommon':

> We were at the right place at the right time. There was a collective sense of energy and enthusiasm and between us all we shared this particular vision. […] Peter was able to stand up and say from an engineering perspective that it could be done in this way. Jeremy was able to take care of the Council members because they trusted him. It just fitted together.[543]

While the timing may have been right for this collaboration to exist, she also describes the 'internal battles' that she and Peter had to face in changing attitudes toward public art involvement. She identifies the crux of the problem as what might be called impervious professional boundaries. Landscape designers within the local authority work in a 'particular way': '[they] design around legal requirements' in such a way as to 'limit the amount of non-controlled activities that can happen' and produce 'spaces that can easily get a person from A to B, but not to spend time in any given place.'[544]

> Their idea of an artist was someone who might carve a bench. It was really really hard to describe that actually we were talking about changing the way they were thinking about their public space. 'No, we don't want the artist to come in and do something decorative in the space you are going to create, what we're going to do is have the artist change the way you think about that public space!'[545]

This rather confrontational position meant that many internal battles were indeed fought ('…Even now talking to you I'm remembering the pain!'[546]), but eventually the Borough's position turned around: 'It was not considering any public space without thinking about design quality and the involvement of artists.'[547]

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[542] Tracey McNulty, INT20101019.
[543] INT20101019.
[544] INT20101019. For a complete transcription of this part of our discussion see Appendix N.
[545] INT20091019.
[546] Tracey McNulty, INT20091019.
[547] Tracey McNulty, INT20091019.

During our conversation, Tracey McNulty makes the point about how the 'discursive voice' of the artist is missing from conventional ways of doing design. The presence of this voice—which here implies uncertainty and, as she puts it, confrontation—is a threat to participants entrenched in their professional authority. This point is significant for two reasons. First, because it emphasises the value of dialogue and alterity in the design process. And second, because it touches on the wider issue of participation by those who are usually excluded from the same process and the difficulty encountered with their integration; in this case artists, but also, and perhaps more significantly, local residents. The general idea expressed by the former Head of the ACD, as well as the policies that made her involvement possible, is that development and design processes are made better (discursive, open, inclusive etc.) when these include collaboration with artists. 'Without their different viewpoint, without a discursive voice within a design team there would be something missing.'[548]

CONCLUSION

The Barking Town Square expresses chronotopes that mark a development toward the integration of public art practices into urban development processes, not only a position adopted by design professionals, but one supported by public policy. The desired effect of this integration appears twofold: one, to blur the boundaries between the various professions and actors in the process, and, two, to cast doubts on standard consultation processes in planning and architecture by explicitly (in the 1999 competition brief) or implicitly (in subsequent Artscape and Town Square commissions) relating public engagement to public art practices. The critical and political potential of public art, as well as its social function beyond aesthetic experience, suggests a possible resolution to the inadequacy of standard consultation.[549]

In the early stages of my research project, the Town Square embodied something of the nature of muf's practice and its position between art and architecture. But as research developed, especially given evidence from the 1999 competition, the project came to represent a more extensive set of chronotopes, including the development of participation in architecture and planning from the 1950s onward, the development of participation in public art of the same period, and the integration of public art into UK

[548] Tracey McNulty, INT20091019.

[549] The overall impression I had in Barking is that standard consultation is indeed felt to be inadequate. This is expressed not only by residents, but by Council officials as well. Council officials reported dismal rates of participation on planning consultations (corroborated by evidence) and residents who would normally participate in reviews admitted being deterred by technical jargon and the increasing number of planning submissions. The general position seems to be that there is a need for the Council to find better ways of engaging with local residents, even though methods seem to have proliferated in the past twenty years. For an extensive review of consultation see Appendix O.

planning policy. The creation of muf in 1994 makes sense, as it were, of a moment of convergence between these various strands and increased interest and funding for a practice that challenges disciplinary boundaries.[550] More specifically with the Town Square, though, their involvement expresses the particular chronotope of the LBBD ACD policies of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Indeed, a culture of collaboration, public engagement and managed uncertainty was already supported in Barking before muf was hired in December 2004 rather than being the result of pressure from commissioned practices (muf, Shelagh Wakely or other artists working in the Town Centre).

A further implication of these chronotopes and their intersection suggested a hypothesis for Part III whereby the paradoxes of designing for the public realm, the ambivalence of publics and public space, as seen in Part I and Part II, are reconciled in practice in the overlap between public art and architecture. That is, the result of their overlap leads to the temporary unification of what might be considered irreconcilable divisions: between ideal projections and everyday experience; between, on the one hand, conceptions of public space and, on the other, multiple and heterogeneous publics; or between design authority and the agency of publics. This, as will now be developed in Chapter 11, is also one of the principal proposals of dialogical theory: dialogue, polyphony and heteroglossia indeed suggest unity and resolution through the co-existence of contradictions.

[550] Their inclusion in the 2008 exhibition *Actions: What You Can Do With The City* shows how widespread this phenomenon has become as the critical practices represented operated in an expanded field of public art, performance and installation art, collaborative and participatory design, architecture and urban design. The exhibition included muf's Tilbury project. Other practices from the UK included WHAT IF, Richard Reynolds, Cow the Udder Way and Bohn and Viljoen Architects. International examples included Recetas Urbanas, Basurama, Hermann Knoflacher, Parkour, Sarah Ross, Urban Repair Squad, Atelier d'architecture autogérée and Farmlab. Mirko Zardini and Giovani Borasi, eds., *Actions: What You Can Do with the City* (Sun Publishers, 2008).

Plate 81

The Lighted Lady at the corner of Abbey Road and London Road, August 2011.

'Public art is effectively documenting the Borough's past, present and future, as the Artscape Project continues to deliver, a year after its launch. The Council had a chance to show off the impressive cultural wares that we now have to offer with a tour of the newest art installations, last week. Arts officers from a range of London boroughs joined councillors, local historical groups, funders and some of the artists involved in the mammoth project, for a look at how far the plans had come. In particular, *The Lighted Lady*, a gateway installation to the Borough, made a notable impression, standing 20 metres high and illuminated under soft multi-coloured lights—representing the Borough's rich cultural mix...

Tracey McNulty is leading the Artscape project and told the *Post*: "We are extremely proud to bring people around here today to show how far we have come in a year.'"

'Public Art Lights Up the Town', B*arking and Dagenham Post*, 31 January 2007, p. 5.

Plate 82

The Catch at the junction between Longbridge Road and the Northern Relief Road, May 2010.

If you go out of Barking, close to where we live, there is a sculpture on the roundabout called *The Catch*. And that, I think, is really really clever. Some of the others aren't that right, the sculptures. But [*The Catch* is] two halves, sort of a net. And they're about, oh, quite a long way apart. And there is a point, as you go around the roundabout, they come and make a big heart. Really really clever.

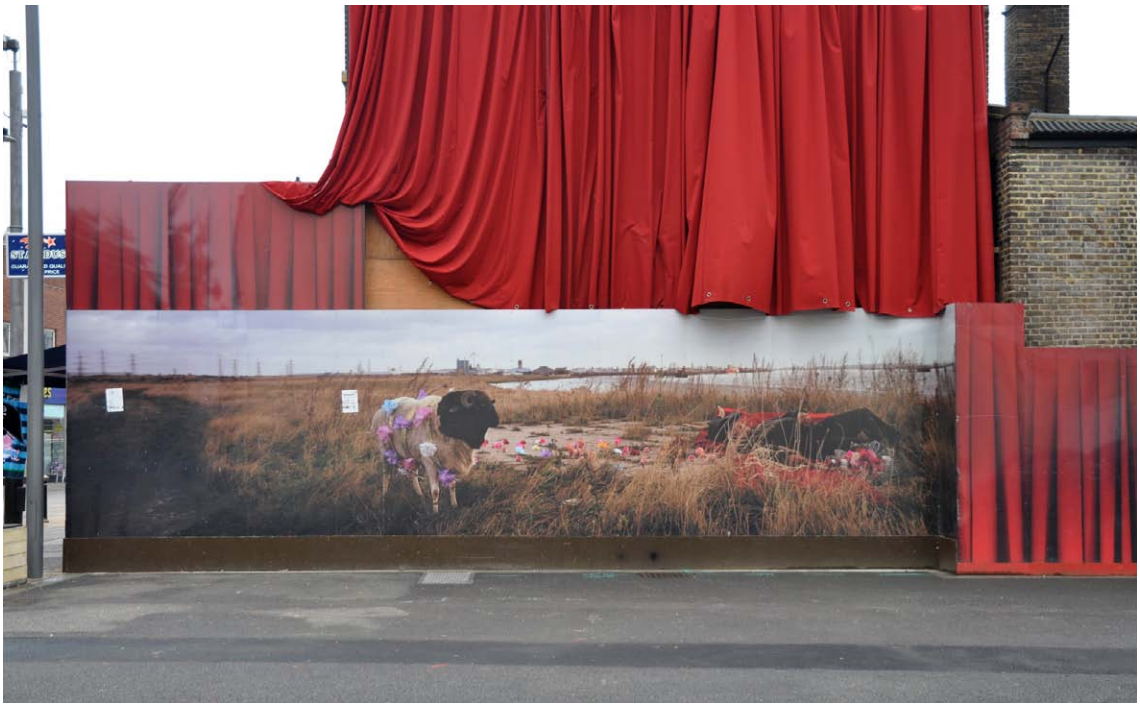
Margaret Nicholls, INT20090716.

'The best time to see and photograph *The Catch* is at about 3.00 - 4.00am when there is virtually no traffic on this otherwise very busy roundabout.'

'Barking Town Travel Guide', <http://www.virtualtourist.com>

Plate 83

Muf installation (now demolished) at Market Square, April 2010.



3.2 PRACTICAL AMBIVALENCE

THE RISKS ARE TOO GREAT

Muf was hired for the Town Square project in December 2004. They were selected over two other practices, Martha Schwartz and Andrew Grant. While the preceding chapter presented the conditions in LBBD policy that should have supported the decision to hire a firm of artists and architects, the procurement decision had surprisingly little to do with the LBBD ACD. No representative of the department was present at the interviews. Martin Brady (LBBD Regeneration), who was the only representative of the Council to attend the presentations[551], wrote in his notes that the panel was divided between Martha Schwartz and muf. Personally, he noted, he would give the commission to Martha Schwartz over muf: 'On the basis of their [muf's] presentation I believe the risks are too great.'[552]

Figure 49. Slide #2 from muf's November 2004 presentation for the Town Square commission.

The content of muf's slide presentation of November 2004 (Figure 49) appears representative of their work up to that point and emphasises circular thinking between details and strategies, a dedication to expanding the boundaries of traditional practice, and creative thinking about occupation of the future project. The risks mentioned by Martin Brady had to do with the problems of delivery by a 'young practice' ('…I had strong reservations over their ability to deliver an appropriate scheme…') with a 'portfolio of smaller projects' compared to Martha Schwartz whom the majority of the panel agreed to

[551] Others included Ken Dytor and Alistair Gaskin (UC), Paul Monaghan and Susie LeGood (AHMM), and Jamie Dean (DfL).
[552] It was fortuitous that I discovered these notes in one of the filing cabinets at LBBD Regeneration since I was never able to contact Martin Brady who had left the Borough around 2006.

be the safer choice.[553] From what I have gathered from interviews and documents, it was eventually the encouragement of DfL and the backing of AHMM that led to UC's willingness to tip the balance in favour of the 'riskier' practice. The work of muf could indeed appear risky for anyone concerned with deliverability and pre-determined outcomes—especially given its position within an area of practice primarily characterised by the blurring of art and architecture and 'in-betweeness'.[554] That is, muf's approach to spatial practice, in which conversation and uncertainty play large roles, goes against the grain of standard architectural processes based on planning a foreseeable and predetermined future.

As will be developed in this chapter, muf's work is characterised by a sort of dialogic play between social engagement and formal arrangements. As Jane Rendell writes, the provocation of muf's work is that 'architecture can "stand in" for conversation and perhaps conversely that conversation can "stand in" for architecture.'[555] The Town Square project included the main commission and a series of parallel projects[556] which, taken together, indeed allowed social encounters and spatial design to overlap, enter in dialogue and often 'stand in' for one another. The exciting proposition of this type of approach then, when understood from a dialogical perspective, is that the ambivalence of dialogue appears as a foundation for praxis. As I discovered in my research, one of the most relevant and fascinating aspects of Bakhtin's work was its foundation in a 'philosophy of the act' and the early development of an architectonics of creative activity.[557] That is, the significance of dialogism is not only that it offers a possible way of understanding design, but that it also suggests a possible method for doing design. The chapter is structured in four sections. The first three establish connections between muf's practice (its play between social engagement and spatial indeterminacy) and Bakhtin's early theory. These three sections present a first step, then, in developing a dialogical theory for design, by adapting and reworking some of the principal aspects of Bakhtin's theory that find resonance in muf's

[553] Confirmed by Paul Monaghan (INT20100507) and Ken Dytor (INT20110616).
[554] Patricia Phillips, 'Public Art: a Renewable Resource', in *Urban Futures: Critical Commentaries on Shaping the City*, ed. by Malcolm Miles and Tim Hall (Routledge, 2003). This ambivalence has been the source of a long debate about the classification of these practices that operate, as Jane Rendell writes, at the intersection of what is perceived to be function-less and functional. Indeed 'public art', the most common umbrella term for these practices, or its expansion along semiotic lines (as in Cameron Cartiere's reworking of Rosalind Krauss' 'expanded field'), cannot fully describe these practices. Abandoning the word public altogether, Jane Rendell suggests using the compelling expression 'critical spatial practice' instead. See Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006) and Cameron Cartiere and Shelly Willis, eds, *The Practice of Public Art* (London: Routledge, 2008).
[555] Rendell, p. 161.
[556] These include two hoarding projects (2005, 2007), the Model Town Centre exhibition and opening ceremony (2007), the Secret Garden and Folly Wall (2007), and Barking Metamorphosis (2008). They are analysed in detail in Chapter 3.3.
[557] M. M. Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability : Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, University of Texas Press Slavic Series (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*.

work. The final section then moves on from the more descriptive aspects of dialogism with respect to design in order to develop some of the principles for a dialogical method for architectural design and its practical implications.

SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

By the time muf was appointed to the Town Square, planning approval for the public realm had already been granted to Urban Catalyst, so no further consultation took place on the public realm as it developed. Engagement with the local publics, Liza Fior points out, was something that they had to set up in other ways:

> It was an interesting situation. There was no requirement for any consultation whatsoever. That's because they already had planning permission for the square so there weren't any legal requirements, although we had to do a huge number of presentations to the GLA and Thames Gateway, etc., etc. That's why there were, in a way, a series of rogue methods to meet people. So the hoarding project, the first one, was us gently bringing in the public.[558]

'Rogue methods', however, is a qualifier that does not reflect reality apart from indicating an alternative approach to the standard consultation practices operated by the Planning department. This standard consultation, as was noted in Chapter 10, was already met by negligible participation. The methods referred to by Liza were, as was noted previously, parallel projects done in collaboration with the LBBD. These, however, did not bring in a representative cross-section of local communities, as they mostly focused on select groups. As Tracey McNulty comments: 'We'd just bring in groups of people that we had to have relationships with […] depending on the project.'[559] The people brought in, then, reflected the ACD department's conception (and in most cases the conception of collaborators like muf or Spread the Word) of the appropriate publics for each project—those they 'had to have relationships with.'

Muf's work over the years has been marked by a series of such 'temporary accommodations' devised, as they claim, to open up the project to other voices. 'Consultation', reads the *muf Manual*, 'can also be about exchange…Project by project we designed temporary accommodation for voices and knowledge which […] were big enough for difference.'[560] Either formalised and given a life of their own (Figure 50), or embedded

[558] INT20091026.
[559] INT20091019.
[560] Muf, p. 12.

within another project, it is claimed these extend relationships and dialogue with local residents or collaborators.[561]

Figure 50. Tilbury horse parade by muf

During our last interview, I asked Liza Fior to clarify what she believed she got out of the engagement with others. Her protracted answer included the following elements: to have an extended presence in a particular place, to set up transactions, to allow the designers to be embedded in a place, to ensure exposure to a set of other demands, to add people to the project beyond those who she is required to meet by contract, to give resonance to the project and add other voices, to allow for things and ideas to go from one place to another, to express fragility, to allow her to work with people she would like to work with (Jurgen Bey, for example) and to give her new thoughts.[562] There is quite a range of effects listed here but overall they tend not to relate directly to design proposals rather than adding different voices to the process. These projects are first and foremost, as Liza Fior herself says, 'methods to meet people…gently bringing in the public.'[563]

Engagement, in this case, is selective in its expected results from an already selective representation of the project's publics. That is, while the engagement itself may yield unexpected results, the actors in the dialogue are at first predetermined, there because of a decision made by the designers (or someone else in a position of authority).

> TBK: When you say you work to make public space public, I'm interested in what you mean by public.
>
> Liza Fior: We recognise that absolute inclusive space is impossible. There is always a degree of exclusion.[564]

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[561] Examples include: 100 Desires for Southwark (1997), Scarman Trust (1998), Pleasure Garden of the Utilities (1998), Tilbury horse parade (2004), Making Space in Dalston (2009-), Hackney Wick and Fish Island (2010), and their curating of the British Pavilion at the 2010 Venice Biennale.

[562] INT20101207.

[563] INT20091026. Elsewhere, Katherine Clarke explains: 'The proposal is not actually created through the conversation. The consultation we do is not to design the object.' Muf and Katherine Shonfield, 'Public Territory', in *Architecturally Speaking*, ed. by Alan Read (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 63-85 (p. 72)

[564] INT20100219.

The desired results of engagement show that, as there is no wholly inclusive public space (exclusion is inevitable), there is also no wholly inclusive engagement with the public. To say that muf are 'all about the voices of others'[565] because they leave the processes of planning open is only partially true. Engagement is always partial in relation to an ideal public, reduced to prescribed encounters with particular groups: a social club, a class of students, apprentices and masons, librarians, other artists, other designers, and so forth. As muf themselves recognise, you 'can't necessarily work with everybody but perhaps you can work with a small number of people with a degree of intensity.'[566] In their case, engagement selectively reaches different participants in the process so that conversations with local residents, like the group of local students and elderly residents who participated in the first hoarding project, or collaborators like Shane Moss, the mason who worked on the Folly (see Chapter 12), uncover voices that would remain silent or knowledge that would have no effect otherwise.

Pragmatism and dissensus

> It is impossible and imprudent to claim an inclusive reading of a site or constituency—however crowded a public meeting, each occupied chair also represents another interested party who is not there.
>
> muf, *This Is What We Do*[567]

Two critical claims needing attention can be pulled from muf's approach to engagement with respect to dialogue: one, that an alternative method of engagement is desirable from standard modes of consultation and/or participatory design; and two, that the publics of a particular project are not necessarily pre-determined, homogeneous and unchanging, but that they develop and emerge with the project. A similar position is described by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till in their introduction to *Architecture and Participation* where they argue that rigid frameworks for engagement (those that do not reflect back on the processes of making architecture) imply the problematic belief in predetermined and unchanging publics. Accepting participation as a practice, they note, is to welcome risk and uncertainty.[568]

> The danger with a normative technique is that it sees the user (once again) as standard, there to be subjected to common methods. Instead, one has to accept that with multiple users, multiple desires and multiple contexts, multiple forms of participation are necessary.[569]

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[565] Awan, Schneider and Till, p. 175.
[566] Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.
[567] Muf, p. 11.
[568] Blundell Jones, Petrescu and Till, p. xiv.
[569] Blundell Jones, Petrescu and Till, p. xvi.

Participation or engagement, in this sense, cannot be understood as positive or effective independently of the project or of those involved in the process, but has to be understood according to its particular context.[570]

In this line of thought, Tim Richardson and Steve Connelly present a review of participation which suggests that, what might be most needed in the face of the difficulties posed by uncertainty and risk, is a 'pragmatic consensus' approach that balances conventional rational planning and the utopia of ideal consensus:

> The potential for participation making a difference in the pursuit of spatial and social justice relies on individuals exercising situated judgement rather than the unnuanced deployment of generic models or toolkits.[571]

Situated judgement is paramount because it recognises the individual responsibility of those involved, participants and facilitators, with respect to a realistic process of engagement. This process, the authors argue, is inescapably structured by power relations and defined by exclusions; the power of those organising the participatory process and the exclusion of people, issues and outcomes from that same process.[572] The quality of participation is what becomes crucial here over the type of tools or the number of people involved:

> Quality means more than developing an exciting toolkit for participation techniques, and engaging ever-increasing numbers of people. It requires reflection over hard issues about power and exclusion, which lead the planner into uncertain and perhaps inhospitable territory.[573]

The main premise of Richardson and Connelly's study is to argue that engagement and participation can be understood as forms of consensus building rather than as radical practices against the state and representation. Importantly, it is the mechanism of dialogue, here, that becomes the prime marker for any form of engagement.[574] Yet, our exploration of dialogic publics in Part I should raise questions as to whether consensus can ever be

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[570] Participatory practices from the 1950s, 60s and 70s make sense, for example, in relation to the critical reaction against Modernism's universal user and housing provision by the welfare state (see Forty, *Words and Buildings*, p. 312). Community Architecture, the UK's foremost participatory movement of the 1970s and 1980s also makes sense at a moment where deregulation appealed to socially oriented practices, private sector developers and the newly elected conservative government, albeit for widely differing reasons. For notes on Community Architecture, see Appendix P.

[571] Tim Richardson and Stephen Connelly, 'Reinventing Public Participation: Planning in the Age of Consensus', in *Architecture and Participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu, and Jeremy Till (London: Spon, 2005), pp. 77–104 (p. 99).

[572] Richardson and Connelly, pp. 97–8.

[573] Richardson and Connelly, p. 80.

[574] Another recent study, *Architecture, Participation and Society*, evaluates the roles of user, client, and public according to types of participation based on communication or 'flow': information (one way flow), consultation (two way flow) and decision-making (two way negotiation). Without making overt statements as to the quality of each, or delving into the structure of dialogue, the study nevertheless sets up an evaluative basis for engagement in terms of communication. Paul Jenkins, 'Concepts of Social Participation in Architecture', in *Architecture, Participation and Society*, ed. by Paul Jenkins and Leslie Forsyth (Taylor & Francis, 2010), pp. 9–22.

reached and whether it is at all desirable. Reflecting on engagement in the LBBD, Tracey McNulty expresses the dilemma as a chicken and egg problem:

> At the time my job was created, the Council had the attitude that two things needed to be done in terms of arts and culture. One, we needed to improve the infrastructure and [second] we needed to improve participation. You couldn't improve participation if you didn't have the infrastructure and you couldn't do the infrastructure if you didn't have a body of people participating.[575]

In other words, the success of engagement is predicated on the prior existence of an informed and organised community of willing participants. But as Tracey McNulty's comment hints at, this belief is challenged as soon as one recognises the dialogic nature of publics. For Richardson and Connelly, this translates into the inevitable and necessary exclusion of people from the process.[576] For Jeremy Till, this point is what ultimately amounts to a fundamental flaw in participatory movements like Community Architecture. By supporting the myth of a 'purified community', Community Architecture paradoxically implies a utopian homogeneous community *already existing* and willing to create and manage their own environment—rather than more complex and heterogeneous publics, the 'impure community'.[577] With the Town Square, this is what ultimately, in Chapter 5, challenges the Mayor's claim that the result of the 2000 exhibition resulted in a direct match between the 'public's choice' and the completed project, and supports Jeremy Grint's doubts about the accurate representation of the community.

In this sense, it is relevant to note the resonance between Jeremy Till's critique of Community Architecture and Claire Bishop's critique of public art. Both argue that participation has to be matched to a heterogeneous and often antagonistic model of society.[578] Bishop's position is best understood in an exchange she had with Grant Kester in the pages of *Artforum* that emphasised their apparent irreconcilable positions.[579] Bishop argued that truly democratic art needs to play on a certain amount of antagonism, otherwise the work risks being excruciatingly ethical and bland.[580] Kester, on the other

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[575] INT20091019.

[576] For Jenkins and Forsyth, whose study was mentioned in Footnote 574, this problem is defined as the realisation that any community is in reality a range of communities with potentially conflicting interests.

[577] Jeremy Till, 'Architecture of the Impure Community', in *Occupying architecture : between the architect and the user*, ed. by Jonathan Hill (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 61–76; also see Paul Rodaway, 'Community Architecture', *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 8 (1988), 343–346; M. D. Uncles, 'Community Architecture', *Environment and Planning A*, 21 (1989), 552; and Appendix P.

[578] Claire Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics', *October*, 2004, 51–79 <doi:10.1162/0162287042379810>; and Till, pp. 61–76.

[579] Claire Bishop, 'The Social Turn: Collaboration and Its Discontents', *Artforum International*, 44 (2006), 178–183; Grant H. Kester, 'Another Turn', *Artforum International*, 44 (2006), 22; Claire Bishop, 'Claire Bishop Responds', *Artforum International*, 44 (2006), 24.

[580] See Bishop, 'Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics'; and Bishop, 'The Social Turn'. She argues that this is especially needed at a time when New Labour is co-opting the rhetoric of relational art into its inclusion

hand, argued for a discursive approach in public art (what he calls dialogical art) based on the notion that the work is arrived at in collaboration rather than posited by the artist from a privileged position.[581] Recently, Kim Charnley put forward the view that the exchange between Kester and Bishop shows how their respective positions negate the political aspects of collaboration. Charnley argues that collaborative practice is fundamentally based on the contradiction between a fully ethical position and a fully autonomous position. It is the navigation between these two poles—overlooked by both Bishop and Kester—that defines the politics of collaborative work. Charnley writes:

> Collaborative artwork is fascinating because it is a nexus of contradictory claims where the political potential of art directly confronts its institutional character. Work that explores and thrives on this dissensus neither needs to abandon ethics, nor should it relinquish the tradition of avant-garde confrontation. A 'recalibration of the senses' is impossible in an ethically neutral space, just as dialogue is weak if it avoids conflict.[582]

Charnley's reading of dissensus as the *modus operandi* of collaborative art agrees with those, like Jeremy Till or Richardson and Connelly, who emphasise the uncertain, ambiguous and often difficult dialogue that characterises engagement in architecture and design. That is, engagement, like dialogue, should imply risk and uncertainty, unpredictable outcomes, unexpected responses, agreement and disagreement, and situated decisions that simultaneously include and exclude people from the process. It is these aspects of engagement, also revealed in muf's practice (and, as we saw, in the policies of the LBBD ACD), that lead us into a first exploration of some dialogical principles for design. This comes before our exploration of muf's approach to spatial arrangement because these principles also came to be applicable, as my research developed, to a form of social engagement through spatial indeterminacy.

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policies. Good art, in her mind, needs to remain at arms length from the state apparatus otherwise it runs the risk of losing its edge.

[581] See Kester, *Conversation Pieces*.

[582] Kim Charnley, 'Dissensus and the Politics of Collaborative Practice', *Art & the Public Sphere*, 1 (2011), 37–53 (p. 51) <doi:10.1386/aps.1.1.37_1>. 'Recalibration of the sense' is from Bishop while non-conflictual art is from Kester.

> Paradoxically, in order to make the thing the collaboration has to be about the making of the relationship rather than the object.
>
> muf, *This Is What We Do*[583]

As mentioned previously, an exciting aspect of Bakhtin's theory, early on in my research, was that it seemed to make sense of and challenge muf's particular approach to design and social engagement. This became increasingly evident when muf's approach was characterised, as it was above, according to dialogue, uncertainty, inclusion and exclusion, and collaboration. Having established these main aspects according to muf's own explanations, as well as their critical implications, we are now in a position to explore their connections to dialogue further according to our Bakhtinian model. That is, we can develop and adapt Bakhtin's early theory of creative activity to design following three major points raised by muf's approach to social engagement: the making of relationships, individual responsibility *vis-à-vis* inclusion and exclusion, and the uncertainty of collaboration.

The early essays of Bakhtin fall under what Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist have called 'the architectonics of answerability'.[584] As they point out, these early essays are focused on the relationship between parts and whole (architectonics) and on situated actions in space and time (answerability). An architectonics of answerability, then, describes the network of relations that frame every answerable action by an individual. The relevance of these ideas to design is further supported in the way they are developed through an exploration of creative activity and authorship. In my research, they act as the foundation for a theory of dialogical design predicated on three Bakhtinian concepts: architectonics, answerability, and co-authorship. They rework, in other words, the three points listed above that were brought out from muf's approach to social engagement, and, as will be seen, start touching on the particulars of spatial design.

Unfinalised constructions

In his theory of creative activity, Bakhtin puts forward the idea that any entity cannot be understood independently as a 'thing in itself'[585], but rather as part of a structural moment that also includes the act of understanding. He describes this structural moment as architectonics or, as he writes, 'the intuitionally necessary, nonfortuitous disposition and

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583 Muf, p. 29.
584 Clark and Holquist.
585 M. M. Bakhtin, 'Art and Answerability', in *Art and Answerability : Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. xxxviii.

integration of concrete, unique parts and moments into a consummated whole.'[586] Architectonics, in other words, makes sense of an entity by relating 'the distinctiveness of the aesthetic object'[587], the 'interconnection of its constituents'[588], and the 'progression of human thinking'.[589] What architectonics suggests, then, is that a work of art or architecture, a person or a public, is characterised by the progress of understanding it and its relations to others.[590] In this case, architectonic wholes do not, for Bakhtin, have intrinsic or essential meanings, but meanings that are the momentary constructions of thinking subjects situated in space and time. 'Everything in this world', Bakhtin writes, 'acquires significance, meaning, and value only in correlation with man.'[591] Michael Holquist notes that for Bakhtin

> wholes are never given, but always achieved; work—the struggle to effect a whole out of the potential chaos of parts—is precisely what, in fact, architectonics theorizes.[592]

The distinctiveness of Bakhtin's concept, Holquist further notes, 'lies in the particular areas in which he combined architectonics with other of his characteristic subjects.'[593] In my research, I have extrapolated Bakhtin's architectonics to architecture, so that the concept could start to describe, for example, the relation between muf and local residents as it relates to the whole of the project, or the relation between individual elements and areas of the design proposal to the whole of the Town Square. Its significance, when we adapt the concept to design, is to present the project or its participants, for example, as a network of relations whose meaning is constructed rather than given. Muf's dictum about the making of relationships and their approach to social engagement through conversation make sense, when understood according to Bakhtin's theory, as a desire to affect the architectonics of the project. Furthermore, there is, in Bakhtin's theory and as we saw with alterity in Part I, no absolute viewpoint from which to perceive an object or a person fully and completely, there is always need for another viewpoint outside our own. Paradoxically, then, an

586 Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 209.
587 Bakhtin, 'Problem of Content', p. 300.
588 Bakhtin, 'Problem of Content', p. 300.
589 Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 300.
590 Architectonics, in other words, is a precursor to what Todorov would later identify as the defining principle of dialogism, or alterity. See Chapter 1.2.
591 Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*, p. 61; also Haynes, p. 48.
592 Michael Holquist, 'Introduction: The Architectonics of Answerability', in *Art and Answerability : Early Philosophical Essays*, by M. M. Bakhtin (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), p. xxiii.
593 Holquist gives some examples including the relation between individual texts to a whole that constitutes their genre, and the relation between different discourses to a whole called language. Michael Holquist, *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (Routledge, 1990), p. 150.

architectonic 'whole' is always, to use Bakhtin's term, unfinalisable.[594] The Town Square understood as a dialogical concept defined by multiple chronotopes (in Part II), or the relationships within the design process understood as situated events (in Part I), are instances of understanding the project of architecture as an unfinalisable construction.

Answerability

The second concept requiring attention is Bakhtin's notion of answerability. There is, in his early theory, as well as his later writings on language, a sustained insistence on the situated and embodied act.[595] Value, rather than being attributed from a fixed moral code, is something that is evaluated in process, contingent on a particular—situated—architectonic relationship between two or more people.[596] The 'architectonics of answerability', as noted briefly before, thus refers to the indissoluble relationship between a person's action, their unique position in space and time, and their immediate relational context.[597] The one who acts, Bakhtin supports, is affirming their position in the world which is, for every human being, unique. A particular action or deed can only be performed by one person, the only one who happens to *be* at this occurrence in time and space. Thus the 'actually performed act […] once-occurrent, integral, and unitary in its answerability'[598] becomes the foundation of ethics exactly because it is subjective and embodied.[599] This is, as Bakhtin succinctly puts, our 'non-alibi in being'.[600]

The connection, here, to the ethics of design and collaboration can first be established by reworking Richardson and Connelly's earlier quote (see p. 266) in terms of an architectonics of individuals exercising situated and *answerable* judgement (that is, contingent on their own place, their relationships to others and the developing processes of design) rather than relying on predetermined codes or absolutes.[601] More specifically with

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[594] Hence, Bakhtin's praise for Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel in which each voice, each character, is neither whole in the author's conception nor is it ever made whole in the reader's. M. M. Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (U of Minnesota Press, 1984), p. 51.

[595] In *Philosophy of the Act* Bakhtin deals with the deed in general, while the emphasis later shifts, in *Discourse in the Novel* for example, to speech acts and the direct experience of heteroglossia. In both cases, though, the focus is on situated and embodied actions.

[596] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*, n. 20 and p.74; and Valerie Z. Nollan, ed., *Bakhtin: Ethics and Mechanics*, Rethinking Theory (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2004), p. xx.

[597] Michael Gardiner points out three main characteristics of alterity ethics or dialogical ethics: a general suspicion of reductive and totalising theories; the 'spontaneous' relationship between self and other; and emphasis on the everyday and corporeality. Gardiner, 'Alterity and Ethics: A Dialogical Perspective', p. 122.

[598] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*, p. 27.

[599] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*, p. x.

[600] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*, p. 40.

[601] Jeffrey Nealon has pointed out the tendency, for Bakhtin, to emphasise how an individual acts for themselves rather than for others. While this is fair given the emphasis on one's own answerability, as is also pointed out by Jeffrey Murray, I think this is symptomatic of Bakhtin's intention to develop an ethics based on aesthetics (on perception, principally) and the creative act. In the case of design, and more specifically my research, this is in fact invaluable given the continued significance of authorship and its intricate relationship to the activity of designing for the public realm. See Jeffrey Thomas Nealon, 'The Ethics of Dialogue:

respect to my case study, I have strongly felt this connection between design and answerability in discussions with muf. At the start of my research, design decisions or decisions about engagement with particular groups appeared similar (as following a given position on engagement). As I dug deeper into the project and spoke to its participants, however, each of these events revealed a much more intricate and unique architectonics. The decision to engage with particular groups, for example, reveals an answerable position by both muf and the LBBD ACD to work with specific people but not others. Each parallel project (developed in Chapter 12) also makes sense and expresses values attributed to particular relationships in the project (for example the relationship between the LBBD ACD and muf, or the one between the designers and BLC librarians). Liza Fior's answer to my question about what her ethical position was with regards to designing public space was given independently of any given situation. 'Making public space open'[602] made sense, in our interview, as a general ethical guideline for muf's work (also influenced by my asking) but failed to reflect the intricacy of particular events in the project—especially those for which openness was exclusive. Adapting Bakhtin's concept of answerability to design implies that a designer's ethical position should be understood as the result of a particular architectonics constituted by (or given value by) a multiplicity of voices—including professional codes and relationships to others.[603] In addition, each design action expresses the designer's own unique position, so that we may recast Bakhtin's maxim to say that there is, indeed, no alibi in designing.

Co-Authoring

The third and final of Bakhtin's concepts to be explored, before moving on to muf's approach to spatial design, is co-authorship. The significance of the concept to design, more so than architectonics and answerability, is in the way the early Bakhtin texts explore creative activity through the act of authoring and suggest that the activity of making sense or giving meaning to our environment and ourselves is a form of authoring. For Bakhtin, our environment is not given but rather 'presents itself to us as a project, something to be completed through creative human practice and an ongoing process of value-creation.'[604] Every event of our existence, in this model, is a creative act because we are adding something new to this construction.[605] What I suggest is to treat design as equivalent to

Bakhtin and Levinas', *College English*, 59 (1997), 129–148; and Jeffrey W. Murray, 'Bakhtinian Answerability and Levinasian Responsibility: Forging a Fuller Dialogical Communicative Ethics', *Southern Communication Journal*, 65 (2000), 133–150 <doi:10.1080/10417940009373163>.

[602] Liza Fior, INT20100219.

[603] The 'multiplicity of voices' is also how Jeffrey Murray qualifies dialogical ethics. Murray.

[604] Gardiner, 'Alterity and Ethics: A Dialogical Perspective', p. 139.

[605] Haynes, p. 55.

Bakhtinian authoring in-so-far as it is an act that 'shapes values into forms'[606], or, in other words, turns the particular architectonics of a situation into a design proposal. Furthermore, what struck me early on as a significant aspect of Bakhtin's theory of creative activity, in relation to participation and collaboration, was its suggestion that all authoring is in fact co-authoring. As we saw above, giving meaning to a particular architectonic situation implies (requires, in Bakhtin's model) another point of view. Bakhtin writes: 'the aesthetic *whole* is not something co-experienced, but something actively produced, both by the author and the contemplator.'[607] This idea also found its way into his later linguistic writings and the concept of dialogue. 'From the very beginning', Bakhtin writes, 'the speaker expects a response from [others], an active responsive understanding.'[608] There is a strong suggestion, here, about the inescapable polyphony of creative activity, which Bakhtin supports without much restraint. Treating creative activity otherwise, he writes, is subscribing to an illusion.[609]

However dogmatic Bakhtin's position is on co-authorship, it nevertheless resonates strongly with what I experienced in my research. Design decisions, proposals or social engagement events could not be dissociated from the polyphony of the project. They were situations that only made sense in relation to the architectonic relationships that they expressed or acted on. Understanding design according to Bakhtinian authoring not only means establishing links 'between an architect and a set of material actions in the world[610], but also between an architect and a set of social actions. This, it can be said, is also supported by positions that see architecture as a production of socio-spatial relationships, moving away from an ethics directed at a finished product to one founded on relationships.[611] Jeremy Till writes:

> The key ethical responsibility of the architect lies not in the refinement of the object as static visual product, but as contributor to the creation of empowering spatial, and hence social, relationships in the name of others.[612]

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606 Clark and Holquist, p. 10.
607 Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 67.
608 Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres', p. 94.
609 Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 200.
610 Anstey, Grillner and Hughes, p. 7.
611 Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, 'The Invisible Ethic: The Motivations of Spatial Agency' (presented at the Ethics and the Built Environment, Nottingham, 2009); Neil Leach, 'Less Aesthetics, More Ethics', in *Architecture and Its Ethical Dilemmas*, ed. by Nicholas Ray (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005).
612 Till, *Architecture Depends*, p. 178. Till makes a point of stating that architects work 'in the name of others'. Does the conception of answerability and an ethics of alterity change if an individual becomes a representative for others? First, as Bakhtin writes, 'being a representative does not abolish but merely specializes my personal answerability. The actual acknowledgement-affirmation of the whole which I shall represent is my personally answerable act. (Bakhtin, *Philosophy of the Act*, p. 52)' A designer might acknowledge a specific whole like 'the client' or a loosely defined whole like 'the public' and they are, as it turns out,

Hence a significant aspect of an architectonics of design and its relationship to dialogue is the mutual equivalence of the ethical and the aesthetic.[613] Similarly, both muf's approach to social engagement, and, as we will see next, their approach to spatial design, make particular claims about collaboration and participation that we can now understand as playing with co-authorship and polyphony in order to recalibrate the architectonics of the project and bring different voices in relation. Their approaches, read through the concepts of architectonics, answerability and co-authorship as I have developed them here, suggest that the significance and meaning of design processes and products are concretely situated and determined in dialogue.[614] This point is what now brings us to explore the second aspect of muf's work, what they themselves call 'open-ended' or 'ambiguous' spatial arrangements.[615]

SPATIAL INDETERMINACY

In 2001 the *muf Manual* described the common intent of muf's work as 'making space for more than one thing at a time [and] an attempt to bring a sense of largesse to the public realm.'[616] Spatial arrangements were thus claimed to be a possible support for inclusion and accessibility (what muf calls the 'gorgeous norm'[617]). When I asked her for a description of muf's design position *vis-à-vis* public space, Liza Fior responded: 'By opening public space to ambiguity you open it to multiple possibilities and interpretations.'[618] When further pressed for examples in design form, the shared bench for Southwark Street comes up as an early example in the practice's portfolio (Figure 51) while at Town Square muf usually point to the balustrades, the fallen trees or the Folly. While these three specific examples will be evaluated in detail in Chapter 12, I want to now focus on two other strategies employed in the project: the creation of a dialogue between function and flexibility; and the use of collage aesthetics. These two strategies turn the premises of social engagement into spatial form, or, expressed using our dialogical theory, turn the architectonics of co-authorship into design proposals.

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answerable for having made that affirmation, for making certain assumptions about their employers or the anticipated users of the final project or, for that matter, any other participant in the process.

[613] See introduction in Bakhtin, 'Art and Answerability'. A similar reciprocity is argued for in Awan, Schneider and Till; Till, *Architecture Depends*; Findeli; Jane Collier, 'Moral Imagination and the Practice of Architecture', in *Architecture and Its Ethical Dilemmas*, ed. by Nicholas Ray (London: Taylor & Francis, 2005); and Collier, 'The Art of Moral Imagination'.

[614] Jeffrey Nealon is also suspicious of Bakhtin's emphasis of authorship (see Footnote 601). Even though Bakhtin acknowledges the importance of the other in giving form and meaning to a work of art the emphasis remains on *my* authorship. Nealon argues that the Bakhtinian self only encounters the other as a way of enhancing its own sense of multiplicity. Nealon, *Alterity Politics*, p. 42.

[615] These adjectives were used in separate interviews with Alison Crawshaw, Liza Fior and Katherine Clarke.

[616] Muf, p. 13.

[617] Muf architecture/art, 'Profile'.

[618] INT20100219.

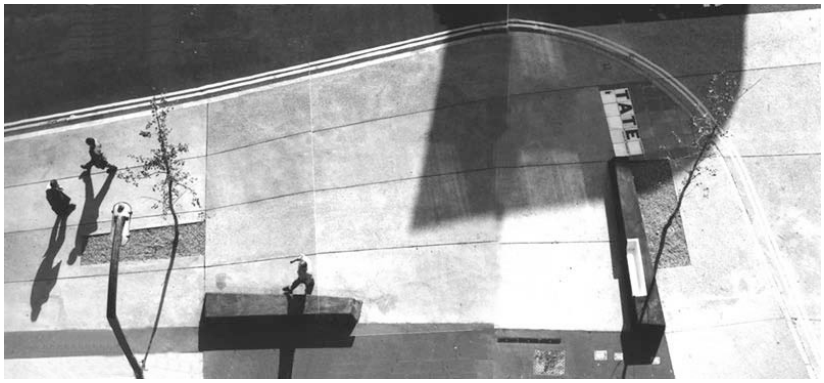

Figure 51. Pilot project for Southwark Street with a kid bench within an adult bench at right. Source: muf

Flexibility and dialogue

In addition to a 'clutter free' space, the 2004 brief includes several notes related to flexibility. Under the heading 'The function of the Town Square spaces', it reads:

> In order to encourage effective and enjoyable usage of the space, a multi-functional area should be created giving the opportunity to stage special events involving people gathering and congregating. This could range from outdoor drama and theatre events music events fairs and fetes commercial trade fairs to political gatherings and demonstrations.[619]

The uncertain function of the future public space is expressed here through an attempt at listing some of the possible uses of the future project as imagined by the authors of the brief. Paradoxically, the brief lists multi-functionality as *the* function of the Town Square: by asking for an area in which any sort of gathering and congregation may occur with the erection of temporary structures (as in a trade fair, for example), the brief is really asking for an area that serves a particular function. This conflict between a want for indeterminacy of use on the one hand, and a measure of control on the other, is what leads Adrian Forty to suggest that flexibility allows architects (or in this case the Council) to project their control over their creation into the future by determining future use.[620] For example, muf's early attempt at 'cluttering' the space with the Orator's Tree, a magnolia tree planted on the civic square facing the entrance to the BLC and a clear example of the Bakhtinian concept of *carnivalisation* as will be developed later, was rejected (Figure 52).[621]

[619] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Objectives for Town Square'.
[620] Forty, p. 143.
[621] I have no indication whether the proposal was rejected by the client (UC), the Council, who wanted a 'clutter-free space', or muf themselves.

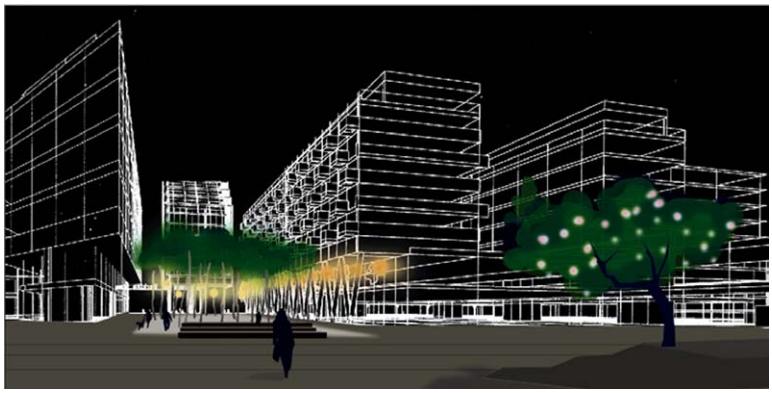

Figure 52. The subversive power of vegetation brought in the middle of the civic square. Early rendering by muf with wireframe background by AHMM showing the Orator's Tree on the right.

The multi-functional flexibility demanded by the Council, however, was taken up early on by muf as a possible conceptual approach to the Town Square. Much is made of drawings found at the Valence House archives depicting the assembly hall of the Town Hall, built in 1961, and set up for a wrestling match (Figure 53). Liza Fior describes their reaction to the drawing:

> Wrestling represented the idea of pleasure in municipal public space. It existed in all of those town halls where there were these chair cupboards so the chairs can go in and they could get rearranged depending on the activity.[622]

Wrestling in the assembly hall became a conceptual idea about flexible space in the Town Square and alternative notions of civic space. The archive drawing first appears in a February 2005 presentation preceded by a title slide announcing 'a new civic public realm for Barking' and followed by a slide reading 'the buildings which surround the space have the potential to perform the role of the chair store.'[623]

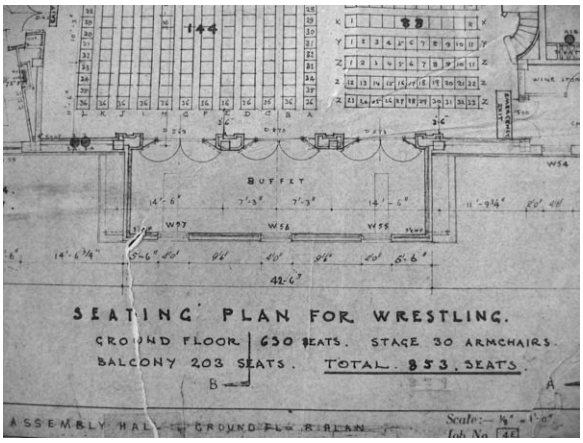

Figure 53. Archive plan of the assembly hall transformed for wrestling. Photo: muf

[622] INT20091026
[623] muf, DSP20050225.

But rather than emphasise the flexibility of the assembly hall in relation to the civic square, muf tend to project flexibility onto the arboretum[624] which, for Liza Fior, becomes 'a fantasy town hall and civic space.'[625] Alison Crawshaw similarly establishes a direct connection between the transformed assembly hall and the arboretum: 'to have a similar flexibility […] was something that the arboretum aspired to.'[626] Eventually, flexibility was built-in through technical means in the arboretum with the installation of electrical and data outlets. Mayor Charles Fairbrass comments on the stage marking the boundary between the arboretum and the civic square:

> If you were a pop group, the street lamps out there have got 13 amp plugs in them. They have sockets you can plug your amplifier in. Get permission.[627]

Evidence shows that there were at least two conceptions of flexibility at work in the Town Square project. The Council emphasised the multifunctional uncluttered space of the parvis, projecting inclusion onto empty space, while muf emphasised the flexibility of the arboretum suggesting that indeterminate space does not necessarily mean empty space (also implied in their response to multi-functional space in the Orator's Tree). These two conceptions meet at the stage, for which Charles Fairbrass further comments that you have a 'readymade audience forwards and backwards.'

Flexibility, or the provision of means for co-authorship, is indeed expressed quite interestingly at the stage (Plate 86 and 87). In addition to acting as a hinge element between two distinct areas of the project (the civic square and the arboretum), the stage can be interpreted as a polyvalent form as defined by Herman Hertzberger. Jonathan Hill writes that Hertzberger's conception of polyvalent 'accommodating' form, as opposed to flexibility, suggests elements that may be used a number of different ways because it denies a simple and singular resolution of form and function.[628] It creates, in other words, a dialogue between form and use.[629] The ambivalent stance of the stage in the project was not lost on Mayor Fairbrass who described it facing two ways. In other interviews with local

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[624] Muf usually point out another function of the civic square altogether. Its 'uncluttered space' is often presented as a negotiating point with the developer. They argue that by doing a project 'intentionally self effacing with little to argue about' they were able to establish trust and gain respect from their employer who would then be more supple in allowing more experimental design work in phase two. This representation of phase one pointedly chooses not to address the clutter-free space and multi-functionality demanded in the brief. See Fior and Clarke, p. 339.

[625] Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.

[626] INT20100929.

[627] INT2010025.

[628] Hill, 'The Use of Architects', p. 360.

[629] Herman Hertzberger, *Lessons for Students in Architecture* (010 Publishers, 2001), p. 149 as quoted in Hill, 'The use of architects'. He further suggests that polyvalence is an appropriate approach given the 'multiplicity in which society manifests itself'—we might read this as dialogic publics—because it resists the 'coagulation of meaning'.

residents, however, I was surprised that its use was not so easily read. The following conversation with Nils illustrates this quite well (we are sitting in the BLC café, looking at the back of the stage):

> Nils: What puzzles me is this raised area. This ugly raised area. I'm looking for some use.
>
> TBK: That's the stage area.
>
> N: For performances?
>
> TBK: Hopefully.
>
> N: [...] Let aside my personal…if it's used as a stage, and it works, fine, I'll say 'I was wrong.' But I suspect what's going to happen is that there may be just a few public performances and like 90% of the time there'll be yobos hanging around there doing their skateboarding.[630]

In another interview, Fred Manson suggests that the stage be used as a 'fourth plinth'.[631] Ron Petchey had a related idea: 'I think [the Council] might have imagined having the political hustings there. They don't have hustings now but…'[632] For official events the stage is used as it may have been intended, for musical acts on St George's day 2010 or acrobatics for the LIFT Molten festival 2010. On an everyday basis the stage area will be used by people resting on its steps but more creatively by children who appropriate it as a play area. They run up and down the ramp, jump off the steps, climb its balustrades and, to prove Nils right, use its ramp and sloping sides to ride their bicycles and skateboards. Although I have never witnessed it myself, a few Council officials have told me that teenagers have also used the stage as an impromptu rehearsal space for dancing. Muf insist, arguing for a political relevance to the architectonic value of the stage, that its steps mimic the Town Hall's steps 'to the centimetre' and that its platform are the exact dimensions of a one-bedroom flat at Barking Central. But nobody I have spoken to has made that connection. As a way of pointing out the civic and subversive intentions behind the design, it is much too subtle, as a form of collage, compared to the more obvious decision of having a raised platform face the Town Hall and be the hinge between the 'fantasy town hall and civic space' of the arboretum and the not-fantasy Town Hall and civic square.

Collage aesthetics

> A collage approach, an approach in which objects are conscripted or seduced from out of their context, is […] the only way of dealing with the ultimate problems of, either or both, utopia and tradition; and the

[630] INT20091202.
[631] INT20091009. He was referring to the empty plinth at Trafalgar Square that hosts a rotating temporary installation and that had just been used for Anthony Gormley's participatory installation One and Other.
[632] INT20091124.

> provenance of the architectural objects introduced into the social collage need not be of great consequence.[633]

At Town Square, utopia, the ideal of the Urban Renaissance and regeneration as read by muf, is offset by their introduction of elements motivated by tradition (craft or aesthetics) and history. For example, the Folly is presented by Katherine Clarke as oppositional to the 'thin façade of new development' and a 'commitment to the craft process that built the surrounding historical buildings.'[634] Liza Fior starts a lecture on the project by identifying the 'sense of loss' in Barking and their intention to make absence present.[635] This design tactic is not something specific to the firm's work in Barking, but has been used in other projects, notably at Stoke with benches made from fragments from what could be massive dinner plates made in the local ceramics factory (Figure 54) juxtaposing the narrative of regeneration and shopping with the often invisible and more intimate narrative of local craft.[636]

Figure 54. Ceramic bench at Stoke. Source: muf

Some details at Town Square do not refer specifically to local craft or history but borrow from historical precedence and other places in order to, as Liza Fior explains, bring in what the designers have identified as missing. As previously noted in Part II, borrowing from the history of others manifested itself in Barking in the form of 'balustrades stolen from balustrades surrounding sculptures in Florence'[637], petrified concrete walls from Florence via German 1970s parking lots, salvage material for the Folly from unknown places in

633 Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (MIT Press, 1984), p. 144.
634 Katherine Clarke, INT20100526.
635 Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.
636 Muf, pp. 92–94.
637 Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.

England, chequered terrazzo tiling in the style of Edwardian residential architecture, and chandeliers inspired by the Moscow underground. Evident in the designers' evaluation of these aesthetic quotations is an echo of Rowe and Koetter's above indication that the provenance of the fragments need not be of any consequence: as we will see in the next chapter, no explanation is given on site as to their provenance.

Having argued that the montage of fragments in architecture can be understood through the development of collage and montage in art and literature, Jonathan Hill continues by suggesting that the same is true for the arrangement of programmatic and spatial elements of design. 'Just as the juxtaposition of the parts of the artistic or literary montage resists an easy resolution, the juxtaposition of the uses and the spaces of the building can be rich in ambiguity.'[638] In Chapter 7, we saw how at Town Square this manifested itself in the 'design of relations' between adjacent spaces with discrete but related character and what led Ellis Woodman, among others, to qualify the project as 'polytopic'.[639] When asked in a lecture about how they do collage, Liza Fior flipped through her slides and finally stopped on one showing where the arcade flooring meets the civic square saying: 'this is how we do collage…by overlapping and knitting things together.'[640] A more precise visual example is given by an early sketch by Mark Lemanski of muf that shows the formal resolution of the three main areas of the project as they overlap and meet at the stage (Figure 55).

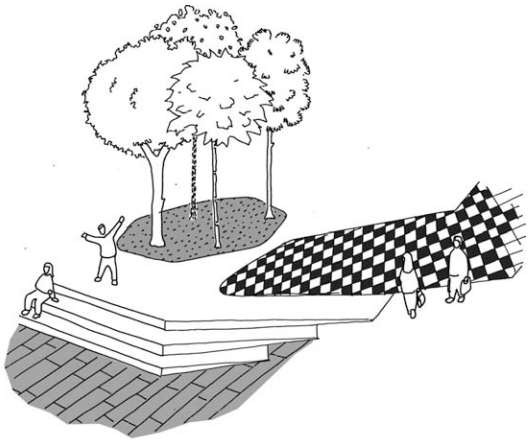

Figure 55. Sketch by Mark Lemanski (muf) showing the meeting of three different areas (civic square, arboretum and arcade) negotiated by the stage and steps.

In our interviews, Liza Fior was visibly uncomfortable about the word collage. She was bothered, for example, by an audience member at her Yale lecture who asked 'but isn't it

638 Jonathan Hill, 'Creative Users, Illegal Architects' (unpublished Ph.D. Architecture, London: University College London, Bartlett School of Architecture, 2000), p. 194.
639 Woodman.
640 Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.

just collage?'[641], which she understood as a critique of the firm's aesthetics and design language, while at the same time happy at being compared with those like Robert Venturi who have supported architectural form as communication. The point of friction appears to be between what she then offers as a view of collage, a relationship between parts and whole and 'the idea [at Town Square] of a dialogue between different spaces'[642], and the tendency in the firm's work to blur the distinction between spatial and social. Muf's work does express a strong position *vis-à-vis* an architectonics of public space, but their spatial arrangements tend to express dialogical play, noted earlier by Jane Rendell, rather than material resolutions. This tendency is also noted by the partners of the design firm FAT who write: '[muf's] projects unpick the social, economic and political narratives of place before reworking these relationships into new configurations.'[643] Here the idea of collage has to be understood as working with socio-spatial narratives toward a spatial re-arrangement both expressing and re-organizing the architectonics of a particular public space.

Muf's strategy of 'open-ended' spatial arrangements, as it has been developed here, rests on two main principles that can tie it back to our developing dialogical framework. The first is an ambivalent position between objects and processes. That is, that the proposed field of intervention for their work is an architectonics of social and spatial relationships. After she had expressed how her interest in architecture as process was spurred on by the teaching of David Greene, I asked Liza Fior exactly what she meant by 'architecture as process'. She answered: 'It is the unpacking of the world in order to repack it as proposition.'[644] This approach to spatial design, in other words, re-formulates architectonics to 'shape values into forms.'[645] The second principle is to support the agency of publics in appropriating, interpreting or modifying the built environment independently of the design process by playing on the unfinalisability of a project's architectonics. Muf's dictum that 'occupation is a form of ownership'[646] echoes Bakhtin's formulation of co-authorship when he supports that co-experiencing becomes co-creation in the act of understanding.[647] Co-authorship is encouraged, in this sense, by indeterminate spatial

[641] Mentioned in both 'Brief Disobedience' and INT20101207.
[642] INT20101207.
[643] FAT, 'A Field Guide to Radical Post-Modernism', *Architectural Design*, 81 (2011), 46–61 (p. 60).
[644] Liza Fior was taught architecture by the Archigram collaborator, whom she recalls 'said the most interesting bit of architecture was the fact that milk got delivered at eight in the morning on every doorstep in London. How amazing was that? He was interested in process, on a deep level (INT20100219).'
[645] A similar reading is given by Awan, Schneider and Till who write that for muf 'spatial arrangements and material resolutions are treated as the negotiation of interests that come about through consultation between public and private, communal and individual.' *Spatial Agency*, p. 175.
[646] Muf architecture/art, 'Profile'.
[647] Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero', p. 65. Bakhtin's position also relates quite strongly to Jonathan Hill's proposition that 'architecture is made by design and use' in 'The Use of Architects' (p. 351).

arrangements that are invitations for other voices to join in on the process, to further the (unfinalisable) dialogue, so to speak, of continued production and reproduction.

What the concept of co-authorship is somewhat not able to fully expose, however, are the imbalances and asymmetries of design processes. After describing a design position on public space based on opening up meaning through ambiguity (quoted above), Liza Fior concludes rather trenchantly: 'but we of course have power because we get to choose what it is.'[648] Somebody who re-interprets or re-produces a certain space according to their cultural baggage or practices is still far from playing a role in the more concrete physical planning of the built environment. Similarly, Liza criticises the prescriptive nature of architecture as a paradox of doing open-ended design:

> Open-ended is a playground that you can also have a picnic on. It's open to children and adults in its language. It's open-ended in terms of temporary occupation, but it is formally prescriptive because some things have massive foundations![649]

While the formal prescription inherent to a project with concrete foundations and road infrastructure means that the authority of the architect is not relinquished, her comment still implies that authorship and responsibility are relinquished otherwise, by recognising that each person is responsible for constructing his or her own meaning. At some point, writes Chantal Mouffe, even the most democratic dialogue is subject to a less-than-democratic closure.[650] Decisions are made and foundations laid. In this sense, practical methods that support open work with spatial arrangements following the aesthetics and political principles of collage, montage and other dialectical forms, run the risk of negating social reality.[651] Katherine Clarke was quick to point out, in one of our interviews, that muf's work, although this may not please local residents who may wish for local iconographic references like 'a statue of a fisherman', retains a strong quality of the *auteur*.[652] And 'architecture as practised by the *auteur'*, as muf write elsewhere, 'has always been about getting what you want.' [653] As with social engagement, the level of exclusion of indeterminate spatial arrangements is an answerable position, which, as Jeffrey Nealon has

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[648] INT20091026.
[649] INT20101207.
[650] Mouffe, pp. 129–130.
[651] On this point, but relating to the Post-Structuralist reading of the city, see Ben Highmore, 'The Death of the Planner?', in *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, ed. by Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000), pp. 156–165.
[652] INT20100526.
[653] Liza Fior, Katherine Clarke and Sophie Handler, 'It's All About Getting What You Want', *Architectural Design: The 1970s Is Here and Now*, 75 (2005), 56–59.

warned with respect to Bakhtin's theory[654], runs the risk of putting too much emphasis on the designer's own authorship rather than co-authorship.

DESIGN FOR DIALOGUE

The principal thread of this chapter so far has been the dialogue, expressed in muf's work, between social and spatial aspects of architecture and their relation to the polyphony of the project (collaboration, consultation, engagement, interpretation or use). The final section of this chapter continues the development of a dialogical framework for design by exploring how the Bakhtinian concepts of ambivalence, carnival and laughter, can inform the practical implications of social engagement and spatial indeterminacy.

Narrative and ambivalence

> We're super-sensitized to how easy it is for things to become tidy narratives. And we listen to other people talk about their participatory practice and we're like: 'Oh yeah? How many actually didn't join in the workshop?' I always call it myth.
>
> Liza Fior[655]

During my interviews and fieldwork, people would speak of the Town Square project by locating actions and characters in time and space, constructing, as it were, a narrative of the project. 'What happened was…', 'So there was this guy…', 'You know how they can be sometimes…', 'What was the architect thinking when they did this…', etc. When the architectural process is understood as a narrative, as above, the multiple events that have marked the process are given particular meaning by being put in relation to other events, by constructing an architectonics of each event and the entire project.[656] My interviewees are, in this sense, doing something similar to what Liza Fior described as architecture as process, an 'unpacking of the world in order to repack it as proposition.' There are two major points that can be brought out here from the relation between narrative and the architectonics of the project. The first is that narrative, like architectonics, effects unity

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654 Nealon, *Alterity Politics*, p. 42.

655 INT20100219.

656 Understanding the design process as narrative is only one of the connections between narrative and architecture. An artefact itself may be a story waiting to be 'unfolded'. See Patrick Dillon and Tony Howe, 'Design as Narrative: Objects, Stories and Negotiated Meaning', *International Journal of Art & Design Education*, 22 (2003). Narrative might also become an interpretive tool for understanding or reading architecture. See Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and Narrative: The Formation of Space and Cultural Meaning* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009). Or architecture develops as a narrative from the perspective of the occupier who moves within it as a temporal and spatial sequence of events. See Sophia Psarra and Tadeusz Grajewski, 'Architecture, Narrative and Promenade in Benson + Forsyth's Museum of Scotland', *arq: Architectural Research Quarterly*, 4 (2000). Narrative (or storytelling) is also argued to offer a better communicative medium, as opposed to specialised drawing, between architects and non-architects that breaks down authoritative hierarchies. See Jeremy Till, 'The Negotiation of Hope', in *Architecture and participation*, ed. by Peter Blundell Jones, Doina Petrescu and Jeremy Till (London: Spon, 2005).

between individual and sometimes irreconcilable parts in space and time. Narrative, in this case, 'represents a coherent world out of conflicts, and satisfies our desire to see them resolved into carefully crafted and rigorously ordered propositions.'[657] This capacity to create coherence out of conflict is crucial because it links narrative with architectonics, dialogue and ambivalence. The second point is that narrative, like architectonics, has the capacity to establish a dialogue between two entities while remaining open and unfinalised. It implies, as Mark Tappan writes, a connection to an other, is procedural and open-ended.[658] These two points are significant to bring up here because, as we have seen, they relate to one of the principal claims of muf's work understood through dialogism; by engaging with others and devising 'open-ended' spatial arrangements, they rework the architectonics or narratives of a particular situation in a way that can unite as well as bring out various contradictions of design processes (for example, the conflict between indeterminacy and empty space in the Orator's Tree narrative, the division between the civic and the feral in the narrative of the arboretum, the separation of local residents from the development process in their first hoarding project, or the conflict between regeneration and heritage in the Folly). Liza Fior, in two separate interviews, suggested that muf designed using imaginary narratives for the future project and that various elements at Town Square were designed specifically as 'supports for narrative', thus linking imagined publics with future use and the firm's authorship with the agency of the project's publics.[659] The overall proposition, here, is that these various contradictions can make sense, so to speak, when they are allowed to co-exist under the mode of ambivalence proper to unfinalised narratives and architectonics. As Liza Fior implies in the epigraph above, tidy narratives are closed up, finalised and lack room for ambivalence.

Our goal here is to link the ambivalence of dialogue to practical forms of making architecture. Before doing this, however, an overview of the importance of the concept of ambivalence in Bakhtin's thought is required. Indeed, ambivalence is so prominent in Bakhtin's work that it may be suggested as the defining aspect of dialogism. Alterity, to start, can be understood as the ambivalent mode of thinking beyond the duality of self and other: a whole in which contradictions co-exist coherently and values are bipolar ('…life knows two value centres…'[660]). Words are always facing two ways: to the speaker and to the listener.[661] Answerability is also facing two ways: one must answer to both life and art.[662]

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[657] Sophia Psarra, '"The Book and the Labyrinth Were One and the Same": Narrative and Architecture in Borges' Fictions', *The Journal of Architecture*, 8 (2003), 369–391 (p. 388) <doi:10.1080/1360236032000134853>.
[658] Mark B Tappan, 'Narrative, Authorship, and the Development of Moral Authority', *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 1991, 5–25 <doi:10.1002/cd.23219915403>.
[659] INT20091026 and INT20101207.
[660] Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy*, p. 74.
[661] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of Speech Genres'.

Authorship as well faces two ways: one authors both oneself and the other.[663] Bakhtin's own thought has also been described as ambivalent, situated somewhere between Marxism and phenomenology,[664] as dialectic ambivalence[665] or double-voiced.[666] Ambivalence is found in Bakhtin's conception of the sign, underlying the ideological currents of language, for example social contradictions and class interests.[667] Ambivalence is also the relation of unity and dis-unity, between a totalising ideal and the concrete reality of participants in dialogue.[668] Or simply the ambivalence between monologue and dialogue which are always present in any text, or between monologue and heteroglossia also always present in the idea of language.[669] Ambivalence, expressed in its simplest form, allows for the co-existence of two seemingly incompatible values: life/death, self/other, subject/object, sacred/profane, etc. Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis write that 'Bakhtin's ambivalence is not so much that of a higher unity of contradictions, as of a perspective from whose vantage point the contradictoriness of the contradictions becomes irrelevant.'[670] They continue: 'ambivalence has the task of regulating the primordial opposition between life and death, to which all other dual forms can be reduced.'[671] This regulatory task is best expressed in what may be the most studied and best known ambivalent concepts in Bakhtin's work and those that eventually bring us to ways of *practising* ambivalence: carnival and laughter.

Carnival and laughter

In *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin draws on the phenomena of carnival and folk culture, especially its humour, the grotesque, satire, parody, to reveal the revolutionary potential of laughter itself. At the base, laughter stands for the mechanism that unifies the contradictions of authority and sociality. The act of laughter is counter-cultural because it has the power to expose the over-seriousness of power and authority and to reveal the authoritarian-monologic nature of its discourse. Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis write:

> In the carnival, dogma, hegemony, and authority are dispersed through ridicule and laughter. In their stead, change and crisis, which for Bakhtin

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662 Bakhtin, 'Art and Answerability'.
663 Bakhtin, 'Author and Hero'.
664 Michael F. Bernard-Donals, *Mikhail Bakhtin : Between Phenomenology and Marxism*, Literature, Culture, Theory 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).
665 Pierre V. Zima, 'L'Ambivalence Dialectique: Entre Benjamin et Bakhtine', *Revue d'esthétique*, 1981, 131–40.
666 Julia Kristeva, 'Bakhtine, Le Mot, Le Dialogue et Le Roman', *Critique*, 23 (1967), 438–465.
667 Michael Gardiner, *The Dialogics of Critique : M.M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 70.
668 Bakhtin, 'The Problem of the Text'.
669 Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel'.
670 Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, p. 129, note 23. Much has been written about the relationship between Bakhtin's dialogics and Hegel's dialectics. See for example Côté, 'Bakhtin's Dialogism Reconsidered', and Gardiner, 'A Very Understandable Horror'.
671 Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, p. 129.

> constitute the primary factors of life and which represent the consequences of the primordial life/death opposition, become the theme of the laugh act.[672]

In other words, the primordial ambivalence of the world is revealed by the act of laughter because no utterance or no text, however authoritative, is fundamentally monologic. There is no voice that knows no other. For this reason, carnival and laughter are seen as counter-cultural forces in Bakhtin, directed against power and authority. As Pam Morris summarises: 'carnival laugher implies the inversion of power structures, the parodic debunking of all that a particular society takes seriously (including and in particular all that which if fears).'[673] For Gardiner, carnival and laughter reveal the ideological forces necessary in the maintenance of order and authority in everyday life. He writes that in emphasising carnival and laughter, Bakhtin draws our attention to the

> underlying sociocultural forces that continually subvert our received commonsensical notions and habitualized viewpoints, and to encourage a renewed awareness of the hidden and all-too-often suppressed potentialities that lie within 'the dregs of an everyday gross reality.'[674]

We should note that the subversive act of laughter is not in itself revolutionary, i.e. it does not have direct effect on authority but rather it acts to reveal momentarily the mechanisms of that authority and the consequences of its power.[675] The continuing potential of laughter then, for Bakhtin, resides in the fact that it is one of the only things in life which cannot be co-opted by power or made hypocritical.[676] Laughter, as it turns out, is the most subversive form of dialogical acts.[677]

The significance of carnival and laughter in the development of a dialogical theory for design is in the way that these concepts tie the ambivalence of dialogue to a practice and its effect. As we saw above, ambivalence unifies otherwise incompatible values. In this sense, laughter, for Bakhtin, has been suggested to be equivalent to shock for Walter Benjamin[678] where the common point between the two is the conjunction of contradictions without synthesis that brings forth each phenomenon. Pierre Zima writes:

> Inversely to official culture which only recognises *absolute difference* and *monologue*, carnival stages the coincidence of contradictions and the plurality of voices: polyphony. In popular critique, in the event of

[672] Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, p. 130.
[673] Bakhtin, Voloshinov and Medvedev, p. 250.
[674] Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', p. 42.
[675] Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis, p. 130.
[676] LaCapra, II, p. 41.
[677] Kujundzic, IV, p. 49.
[678] Beasley-Murray; and Zima. Both thinkers, Beasley-Murray points out, understand the fundamental ambivalence of Modernity, that new authoritarian forces of commodity production can act simultaneously as liberating forces.

> carnival, the absolute difference of *values* is abolished in the coincidence of opposite values which brings forth laughter. [679]

Both Bakhtin and Benjamin further support that it is ambivalence that allows art to resolve the paradox of Modernity. Modernity, as it were, simultaneously looks both ways toward rupture and affirmation. As Tim Beasley-Murray argues, Bakhtin's emphasis on polyphonic and dialogic art shows that he, like Benjamin, sought future reconciliation and unity in heterogeneity or fragmentation:

> Both thinkers, in the end, celebrate not artistic forms that produce images of totality, forms such as the traditional organic artwork whose parts combine into a harmonious whole, but rather forms such as the polyphonic novel and montage which present the world in terms of open fragmentation. Totality, for Bakhtin and Benjamin, is best represented indirectly by means of and against the backdrop of its negation.[680]

Carnivalisation and laugher then, as method and effect, are equivalent to montage and shock for Benjamin. Carnivalisation, Folch-Serra writes, is 'the insertion of genres: letters, found manuscripts, retold dialogues, parodies on the high genres, parodically (sic) reinterpreted citations, and so on.'[681] Laughter, perhaps in contrast to shock, suggests that no authority is serious enough to stand on its own. That the best way to dispel authoritarian monologue is to subject it to ridicule, to render it grotesque, to subvert it and make it other while *retaining* its original utterance, i.e. to carnivalise its discourse.

When these principles are combined with those already explored for dialogical design, the effect is to tip the balance toward the practical implications of dialogue, that the play between architectonics, answerability, co-authorship, ambivalence, carnival and laughter takes on social and political relevance. The policies of the LBBD ACD, as well as the principles behind muf's practice, can be read as practical applications of a desire for unity through ambivalence. Tracey McNulty, for example, is keen to carnivalise the traditional ways of doing of the Planning and Engineering departments by embedding artists into the processes of development in order to achieve a better conception of public space. Muf, again, are understood to unpack the narratives of development and design processes, carnivalise them through the integration of other voices or 'open-ended' forms, and repack them as design proposals. In these propositions, the original form, expression, practice or utterance is never completely lost, but the polyphonic landscape of the situation, along with its multiple contradictions, is brought forward.

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[679] Zima, p. 131. My translation.
[680] Beasley-Murray, p. 125. The same point is supported by Kristeva who affirms that ambivalence is the only way in which a writer (or an artist) can 'enter history while professing the ambivalent morals of negation as affirmation.' Kristeva, p. 444.
[681] Folch-Serra, p. 264.

Dialogical practice

We are now in a position to lay out a framework for dialogical design practice. Dialogical design practice understands dialogue as an ethical-aesthetic paradigm based on social engagement and spatial indeterminacy with the intended result of practical ambivalence. Some of its main features as they were developed here are the blurring of disciplinary boundaries (the dialogue between art and architecture), the recognition that engagement involves flexibility, exclusions and situated decisions, understanding the architectural process as an unfinalisable set of situated relationships (the architectonics of answerability and co-authorship), the development of formal expressions that invite different uses and occupation ('open-endedness' and carnivalisation), and finally the allocation, within the project, for contradictions to co-exist (ambivalence).

At this point it is worth returning to the exchange between Grant Kester and Claire Bishop on the politics of critical art practice, as well as its critique by Kim Charnley, because it touches on some of the principal aspects of a dialogical design. In *Conversation Pieces*, Kester develops a dialogical aesthetic theory based on the Bakhtinian idea that 'the work of art can be viewed as a kind of conversation—a locus of different meanings, interpretations, and points of view.'[682] The book concentrates on work that defines dialogue as fundamentally aesthetic and whose meaning is arrived at discursively rather than pre-conceived.[683] Subjectivity, for both the artist and the viewer/collaborator, is transformed by their encounter as was described in Part I and earlier in this chapter. The intuition to use Bakhtin is right, but unfortunately Kester develops his theory mostly through Habermas, which runs the risk of conflating dialogue with the act of conversation rather than see it in the deep Bakhtinian sense.[684] Much of his critique is spent undermining the avant-garde idea of shock which he finds didactic and patronising to the viewer: shock supports the idea that the artist has the self-proclaimed duty to educate the viewer either from a political or moral stand point. Dialogue, in this sense and as reported by Charnley, breaks down the spectacle inherent to any artwork produced from within the elitist and

[682] Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p. 10. From what I have found, only two uses of the expression 'dialogical art' exist in art theory. The first in 1976 by Melvin Alexenberg who derived it from Martin Buber, and the second in 2010 by Grant Kester who derived it from Bakhtin.
[683] Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p. 13. It is the interaction itself, the relations created by the discursive experience that is the work of art rather than the produced object. Some of the artists reviewed by Kester include Suzanne Lacy, Jay Koh, Wochenklausur and Carole Condé.
[684] While Kester writes that his elaboration of a theory of dialogical art rests on Bakhtin, he actually makes very little reference to Bakhtinian concepts. The two works by Bakhtin that Kester references are *Art and Answerability* and *Author and Hero*, essays that pre-date Bakhtin's work on Dostoevsky and his essays that make up *The Dialogical Imagination*. Kester, in fact, never directly quotes from Bakhtin, but instead uses the work of his critics like Hirschkop and Nealon.

exclusive institution of the art world; a language that is pre-defined and inaccessible to the 'un-educated'.[685] Kester writes that

> while the projects [...] encourage their participants to question fixed identities, stereotypical images, and so on, they do so through a cumulative process of exchange and dialogue rather than a single, instantaneous shock of insight precipitated by an image or object.[686]

Yet Charnley argues that relying on Habermas leads Kester to a glaring contradiction between, on the one hand, the tendency for dialogical art to break down the boundaries of institutions and on the other the need for some sort of 'micro-utopia', ideal speech situation, or institutional understanding between actors.[687] The space of dialogical art cannot be a space of dialogue where 'material and social differentials' have no bearing (*à la* Habermas) while at the same time remaining an identifiable form of art practice. Charnley identifies a tendency for Kester to idealise the dialogical relations between participants and omitting the real conditions of democratic dialogue, usually fraught with dissension, contradiction and power imbalances. Bishop similarly criticises Kester for rejecting the idea that effective political art needs to retain a certain amount of shock value, of contradiction. 'Such discomfort and frustration', she writes, 'along with absurdity, eccentricity, doubt, or sheer pleasure—can […] be crucial elements of a work's aesthetic impact and are essential to gaining new perspectives on our condition.'[688] The experiential emancipation that she highlights as one of the traits of participatory art[689] does not mean a gentle coaxing of viewers into politicised subjects, but often shocking viewers into the discomfort of having to make value judgements on political and ethical questions. Bishop rejects the idea, identified in Kester's book, that participatory art needs to be judged solely from an ethical standpoint.[690] Art, in this case, loses its autonomy because it has been completely subsumed in social activism, political apparatuses or everyday actions. In their exchange, Bishop and Kester accuse each other of being extreme in their position: one supporting bland community art and the other supporting anti-social and irresponsible art. As was previously mentioned, the standstill is resolved by Charnley who suggests that dialogical art moves back and forth between these two positions, that it is both community art and antagonistic art.

The significance of Charnley's resolution is to suggest that dialogical practice should be first and foremost the practice of ambivalence. As is suggested above, this means

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[685] Charnley, p. 48.
[686] Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, p. 12.
[687] Charnley, p. 48. The term 'micro-utopia' is from Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics*.
[688] Bishop, 'The Social Turn'.
[689] Claire Bishop, *Participation* (Whitechapel, 2006).
[690] Hence the unproblematic use in her writing of works by artists such as Alys and Sierra which tread a fine line between revealing the injustice of a society where art is possible and exploiting human beings.

a reciprocity between the ethical and the aesthetic, the social and the spatial, or processes and objects with neither taking precedence. Reducing the product of dialogical practice to conversation and exchange overlooks that in Bakhtin dialogue requires the presence of an aesthetic/artistic object to structure the rather weak 'unplanned efforts of ordinary conversation'[691] and turn it into a transformative dialogical process. Furthermore, dialogical practice also means a negotiation of heteroglossia and carnivalisation. Work that seeks to be fully ethical cannot take itself too seriously otherwise it becomes monologic. Conversely, work that only seeks to generate laughter leaves no room for response.

A PARADOX

There is a paradox underlying this chapter. While muf make a double claim of opening up the processes of planning to others as well as opening up the forms of their material resolutions to encourage different uses and interpretations, they still claim control over the aesthetic resolution of the project. 'There is no loss of authorship', muf explain, 'in building a relationship.'[692] As we saw, the allocations for engagement are selective, focusing on a series of groups and individuals with whom they can 'work with a degree of intensity' but with minor input into the final form of the design. Similarly, their 'open-ended' spatial arrangements show a strong focus on the firm's authorship, which again raises questions as to the effectiveness of shaping the architectonics of social engagement into design propositions. The paradox appears to be that with indirect approaches to participation and engagement in architecture designers are able to justify a democratic principle for their work and still have complete authorial control over its aesthetics and some of its future use. Like methods of social engagement, 'open-ended' or carnivalised spatial arrangements also have an inevitable degree of exclusion and may be at their most effective when they succeed in bringing up not all, but some of the underlying dialogues of the design process.

Recognising that architecture is dialogical beyond the making of the architectural thing does not necessarily mean that architectural practice is transformed or adapted. What has stood out in my research is muf's claim (as well as the claims of its critics) that their particular design methods for social engagement and spatial indeterminacy increase the openness of the project, thereby, in our dialogical framework, uniting dialogic publics with spatial heteroglossia under the concept of ambivalence. Having now elaborated such a dialogical framework for design, the next chapter evaluates a series of situations (details and 'counter-narratives') from the Town Square project which call into question some of the particular claims of both muf and the concept of practical ambivalence as I have developed it here.

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[691] Hirschkop, 'Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas', p. 61.
[692] Muf, 'An Invisible Privilege', p. 65.

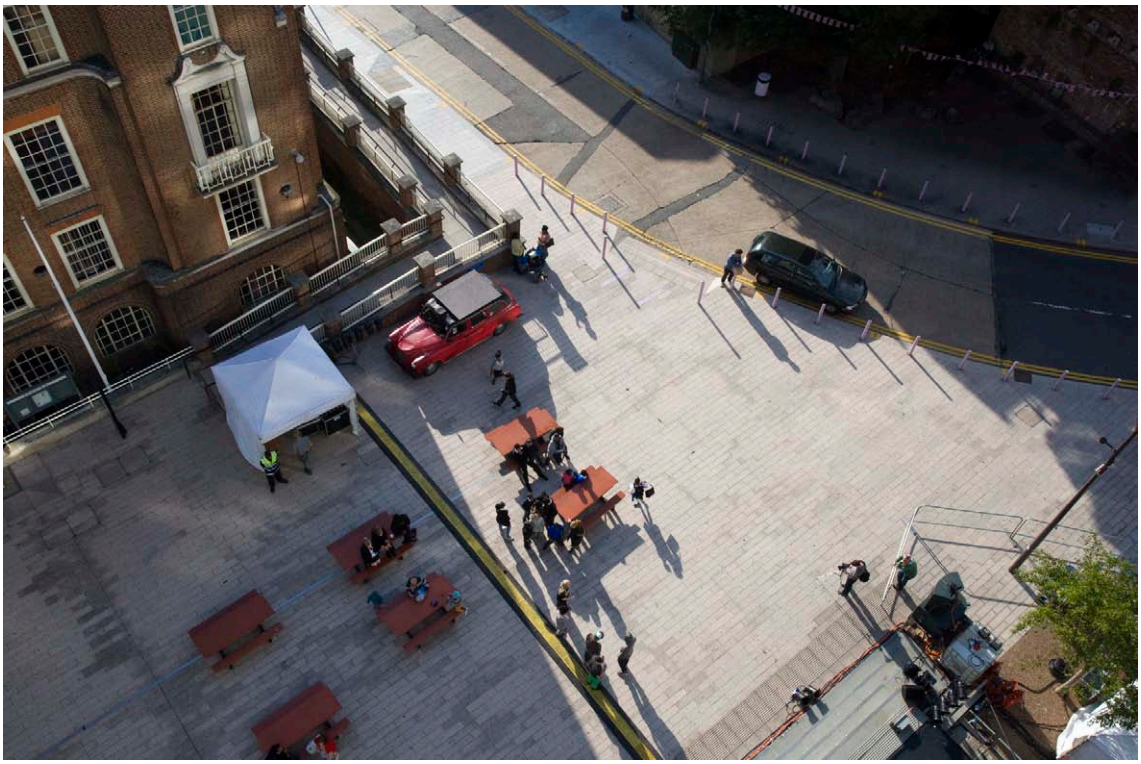
Plate 84

Barking Urban Pioneers at muf studio, March 2011.

Before my own workshop with the Barking Urban Pioneers, the group met at the muf offices where Liza Fior gave them a talk on the Barking Town Square project. The first slide of her presentation read 'from detail to strategy and back again'. Only three of the six teenagers turned up. Liza is on the left and Tom Keeley (Architecture Foundation) on the right.

Plate 85

Town Square during Molten Festival, September 2010.



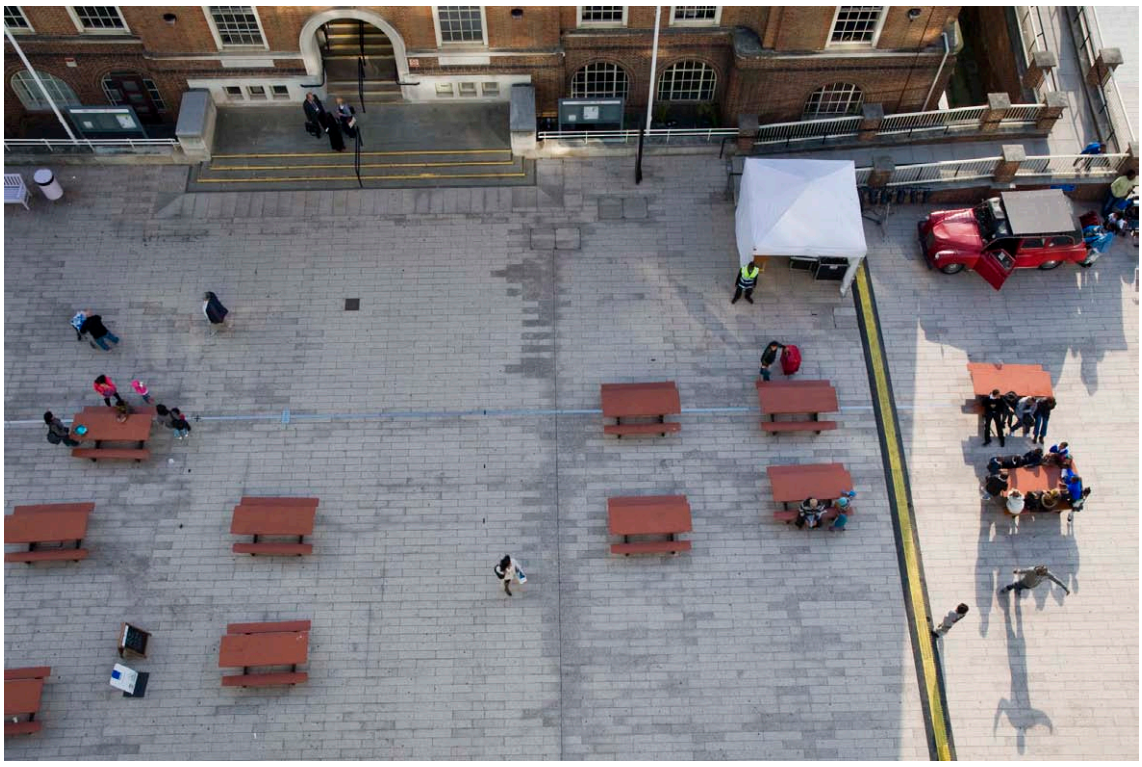


Plate 86

The stage between the civic square and the arboretum, May 2010.

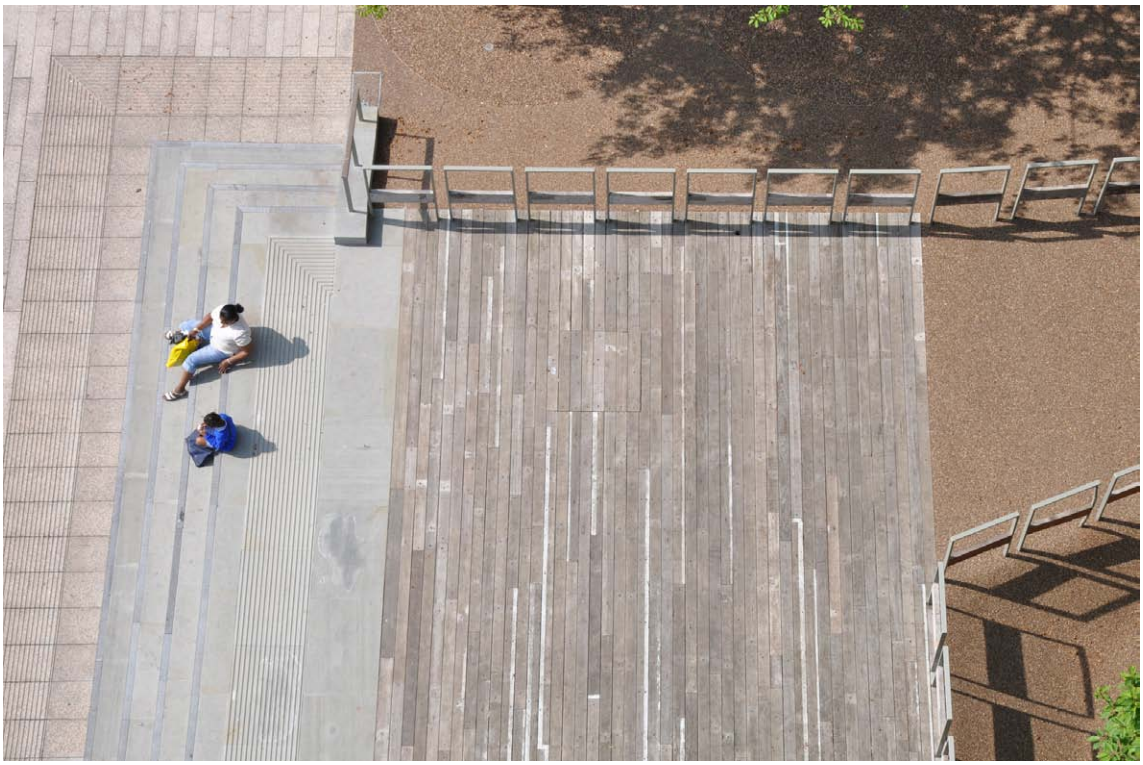


Plate 87

St George's day at Town Square, April 2010, with Billy Bragg (top) and local students performing.

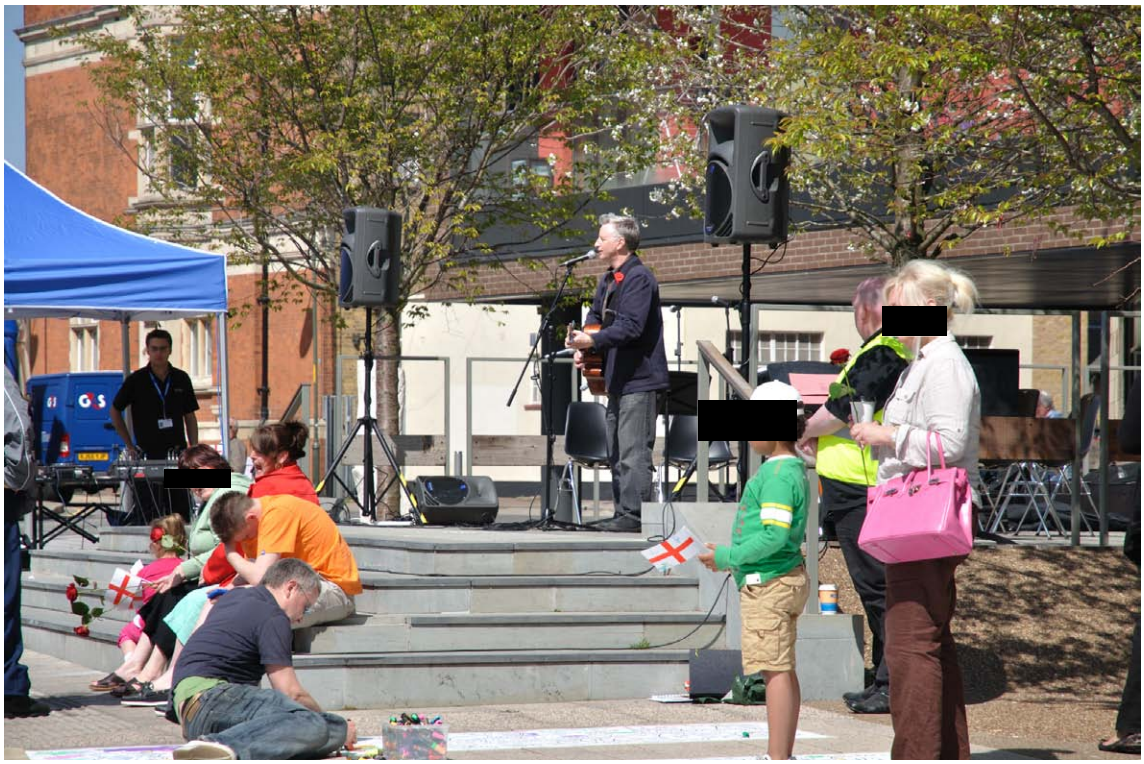
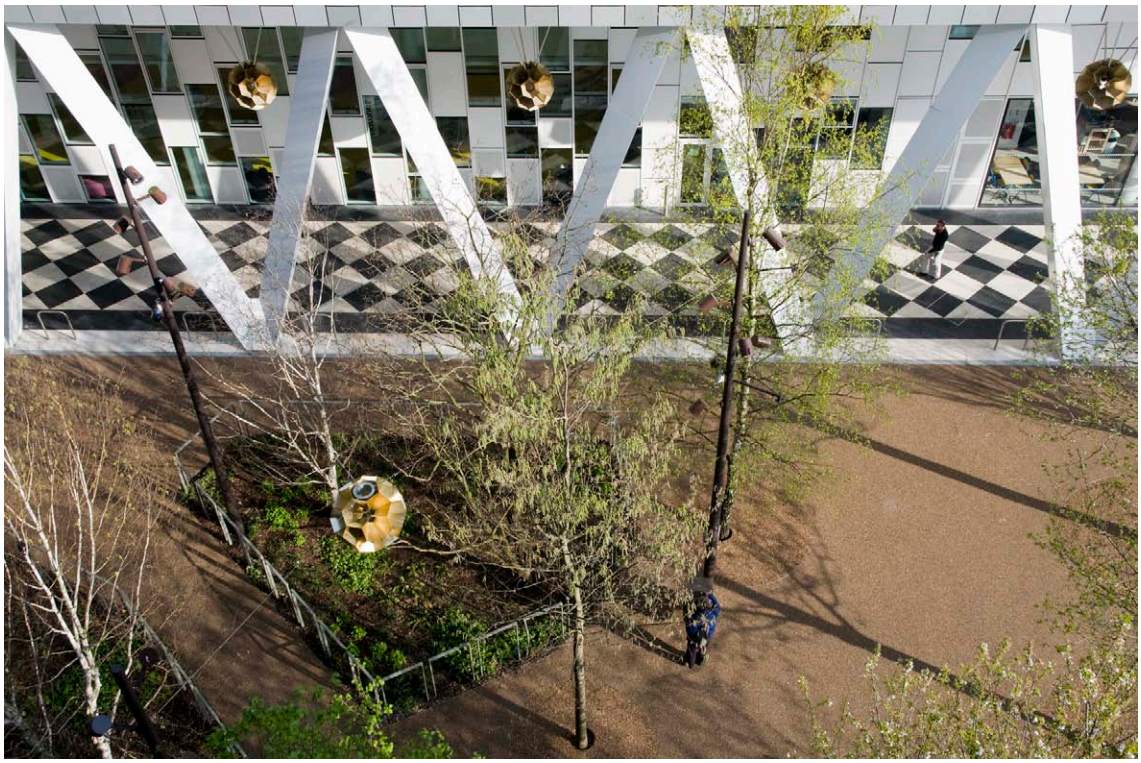
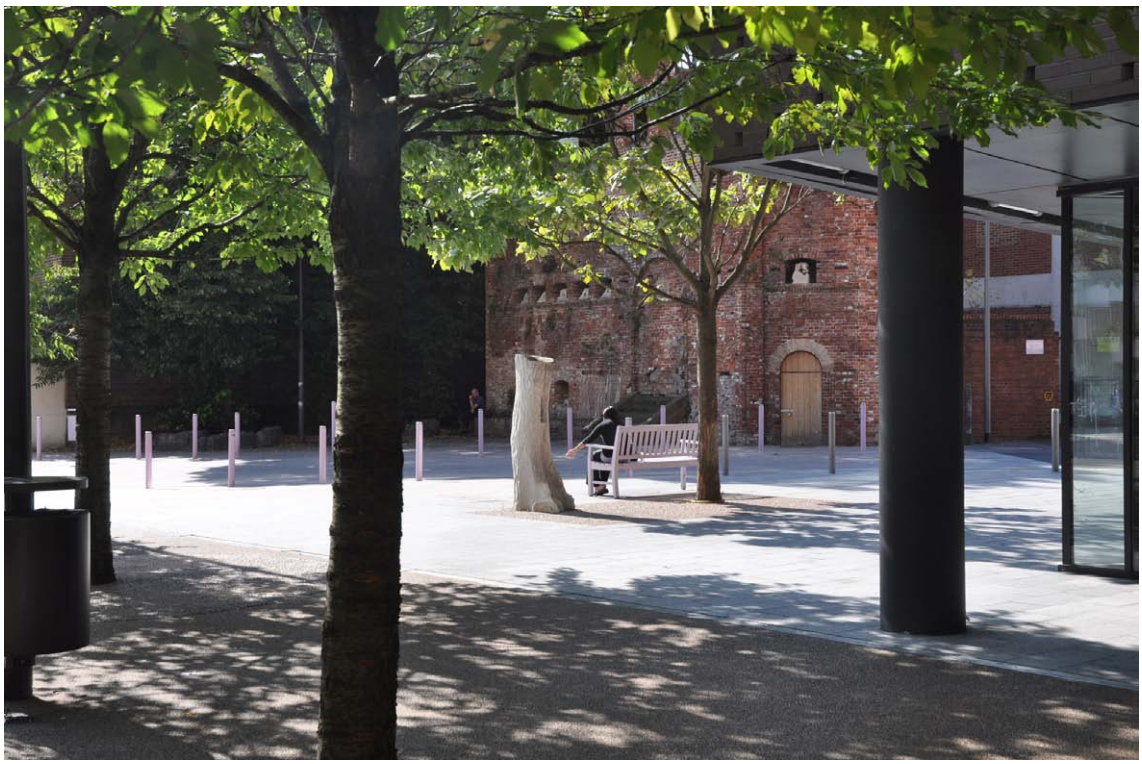


Plate 88

Arcade and arboretum (top), April 2010,
and view from arboretum toward Folly Wall and tree-stump drinking fountain, August 2011.





3.3 AMBIGUOUS DETAILS AND COUNTER-NARRATIVES

Having explored the relationship between design and dialogue in the previous chapter, this chapter evaluates the parallel projects for the Town Square as well as two elements of the main commission in relationship to what was developed as practical ambivalence. As my research developed, these examples emerged as those which best exemplified the overlap between empirical evidence and theory. They not only connected the two, but raised serious questions concerning the practical applications of a dialogical model of design. The chapter starts with two small 'ambiguous' or 'open-ended' details and ends with two intricate projects mixing design, art and engagement with local residents.

THIS MIGHT BE A BALUSTRADE

When asked in interviews about specific examples of 'open-ended' design, muf would usually bring up the balustrades surrounding the planted areas of the arboretum. These are steel balustrades in segments of about a metre wide and a metre high made up of two vertical pieces and one horizontal piece and otherwise left open. In a few places, some of the vertical pieces have been replaced by a steel cast of a tree branch (Plate 89). I asked Alison Crawshaw how one 'makes something "open".' She replied:

> I think the handrails are a really good example of that. Because you know they are a simple looking structure but they imply things like an adult leans on them and looks at the trees or children can run underneath them and they can stop people from walking across but they don't say 'I'm a fence' so they are quite ambiguous.[693]

This claim kept coming up in interviews and lectures, constantly projecting a potential narrative for the detail. Liza Fior, from another interview:

> We knowingly put [the balustrades] around the fragile ecologies so that people don't walk on the desire lines, but they're actually designed so children can climb in without saying that's what they're for.[694]

After a while the claim seemed rather tenuous, hammering ambiguity from a theoretical perspective. My experience of play at Town Square, however, touched upon in Chapter 9, agrees with the designers' projection: children did run through the entire space and underneath the balustrades.

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[693] INT20100929.
[694] INT20091026.

The ambivalence of the detail was not lost on the teenagers of the Youth Forum during our workshop, but not in a way predictable by its designers. Prompted by a photo of the detail, they raised questions about its aesthetics and its 'unfinished' character. 'Why only do a few like a branch? …They should have used real branches.'[695] The goal of the discussion was to recognise the social value and effect of every design detail, however small—that every detail expresses a particular architectonic turned into form. They all recognised the balustrade as a symbol saying 'do not enter' but were puzzled as to why it was completely open underneath letting anybody go through. 'It doesn't work', said one participant. Another thought that they had left it open to avoid graffiti. When, near the end of our conversation, I let them know the intentions of the designers, they indeed recognised that kids could go under while others, including them, will read it as a barrier.

Given my observations on site and the reaction from the Youth Forum workshop, there is a sense that the detail has to some extent generated the openness muf sought, however forceful their rhetoric on its ambiguity. But the detail also shows how designers are not kept from the risk and uncertainty of their own detail's projected ambivalence. As described in Chapter 9, the same detail generated some debate even within muf. The precision of the planting scheme meant that Alison was worried about people crossing through them even as the detail presupposed they would. While she was telling me one of the deficiencies left to resolve was closing off the area behind the small chair (so that people would not so easily get into the planted area, see Plates 89 and 93), Council workers spoke positively about performances from the last two Molten festivals that made use of the arboretum with performers constantly crossing through the 'fragile ecologies' (Plate 97). Ambivalence was neither lost on Council workers nor dancers. Designing for ambiguity, it appears, is not without its share of uncertainty and risk with respect to projected narratives.

THIS IS NOT A TREE

Still responding to my question on open-ended design, Alison Crawshaw continues:

> Another ambiguity might even be the fallen trees. When I've been down there people use them in such different ways. […] Actually I think it's quite nice the way they worked out because they're quite low key. Adults sit on them and kids jump over and hide underneath them so they're actually quite open-ended. It surprises me.
>
> TBK: So by open-ended…

[695] WRK20111206.

> AC: Open to interpretation. It's not like saying 'sit here, do not skateboard here!'[696]

Once again my site observations confirm Alison's comment. One mother told me she makes a detour on the way home from school because her kids love to come and play here, and adults use the trees to rest (Plate 90). There is indeed something particular about the use of the trees instead of the benches precisely because they are not benches. The trees have a similar ambiguity to the polyvalent sitting-objects of Brixton, Acton, Dalston or Bermondsey (Plates 44, 45, 46 and 47) but are somewhat further removed from these formal gestures because of their found-object quality and distinctive difference.[697]

The choice of the fallen trees reflects the end point of a dialogue between a few different voices in the project. Looking at drawings from different stages shows an evolution from mounds (meant to block winds as asked by the Council and act as a place-holder for something to be determined[698]), mounds surrounding a circular structure (Redrow's desire for a giant globe to mark the entrance to the Square reinterpreted as a massive version of the chandeliers partially sunken and acting as play equipment[699]), and finally the fallen trees themselves with a lone rectangle by their side: a permanent ping pong table that was never installed. A temporary table was installed for the 2009 ceremony (Plates 7 and 68) and Liza had subsequently mentioned that they were contemplating a permanent one. The table had been popular during the ceremony and has been hugely popular with local residents and Council officials every time I show my photo from that day. In my workshops, adults and teenagers alike wonder why there cannot be a permanent one installed on the square. While the trees seem successful with both kids and adults, the popular element of table tennis was taken out of the equation, closing, in a sense, the dialogic process started with the September 2009 prototype. As Liza was quoted in the preceding chapter: 'we of course have power because we get to choose what it is.'[700]

The fallen trees stand for the logic and aesthetics of ambiguity taken to an extreme. When I looked at the final plans with Alison and asked about that lone rectangle, she confessed to be relieved it had never been installed. Table tennis would have been far too literal an element for the aesthetics of the Town Square, too closed and unambiguous according to her way of thinking. During my workshop with the Youth Forum there was

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[696] INT20100929.
[697] This otherness may not remain so distinctive since the use of fallen trees for play is increasingly common across London (with examples in Islington, Camden and even one on Barking's Abbey Green installed in 2012). The organisation London Play published their guide to fallen trees as climbing structures in February 2010 around the same time as fallen trees were chosen for the Town Square. There is no evidence to show there was any contact between London Play and muf.
[698] Liza Fior, INT20091026.
[699] Liza Fior, INT20091026.
[700] INT20091026.

interestingly little recognition of the fallen trees as play things. One participant wondered whether the fallen trees were art and suggested they should have been left standing. In quite a wonderful way, she had recognised (but disagreed with) the irony of having dead trees in the arboretum. Intentionally or not, the designers had in fact chosen the one element that, as their Folly does with Barking Central, carnivalised their own project and acted as a reminder that one day the arboretum trees may end up as ambiguous play equipment.

FIRST HOARDING PROJECT

Muf was hired by the LBBD to do the first hoarding project in February 2005. The project, in its finished form, consisted of 18 meters of hoarding (from phase one demolition) made available by developer UC for a public art installation. It is unclear whether the brief was discussed with muf prior to being officially submitted, but the document dated 28 February 2005 gives very clear directives. The artist is to engage with local groups in 'specific design workshops to produce the finished article' which is hoped will create 'a dialogue regarding the development of the public realm in and around the space.'[701] Tracey McNulty recalls how the commission sparked discussions between her and muf about the future use of the space:

> [They were] informal sitting down conversations about what might happen there and how do you encourage people who look at the space and have looked at the space the same way for ages to imagine it alternatively having completely different uses.[702]

Rephrased according to dialogical theory, the project can be said to have had the goal of carnivalising the space (both Town Square and, it can be argued, the space of regeneration) so as to show a different narrative about its production. Muf engaged with two groups for this project: students from the Barking and Dagenham College School of Performing Arts and older local residents from the Afro-Caribbean Lunch Club. Katherine Clarke recalls taking both groups on a guided tour of Tate Modern:

> Through the conversations that were then had on the coach on the way there and the way back we sort of began to interrogate their attitude to public space. What was interesting was that the younger people didn't think the public realm was designed at all. They just though it was a sort of consequence of the gaps between the buildings.[703]

[701] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Hoarding, Commission Brief for Muf Architecture/art', 2005, p. 1.
[702] INT20091019.
[703] INT20100331.

As Katherine comments, the older residents were less interested in participating because they had 'stronger social bonds' and the public realm was for them a place of memory rather than a social space to invest.[704] For the rest of the workshops students were evidently more closely involved than older residents who, as Katherine euphemistically put, 'acted as critics to the process.' Supported by discussions about 'the everyday being a backdrop for art' the students wrote and rehearsed three scenarios to be acted out on the street (Figure 56). 'It was done very simply in that they collected props and constructed it themselves. We went out with them and they set it up as a *mise-en-scène* […] which we then photographed and that became the billboard.'[705]

Figure 56. Muf workshop with performing arts students. The projection behind the students is of the original space for the Folly Wall. Source: muf

The photographs of the finished product show the juxtaposition of muf's hoarding with the developer's (Figure 57). In Chapter 3 we saw how this juxtaposition represented two versions of invented publics—one coming out of the logic of the market and regeneration politics (large individual and anonymous faces in bright colours), the other an attempt to humanise the development process by involving local residents. The first hoarding project, Katherine Clarke says, 'revealed the community of Barking back to itself.'[706] The invented *mises-en-scènes* are distorting mirrors that reflect other narratives for the site and carnivalise the developer's own hoarding and narrative about regeneration. Both hoardings thus become counter-point voices in the same dialogue.[707]

[704] My own experience in fieldwork seems to agree with Katherine's impression. However, it was not so much age that I understood to affect people's perception of public space in the Town Centre as the time they had lived in the Borough, or how their 'social bonds' were intricately tied to the built environment.
[705] Katherine Clarke, INT20100331.
[706] INT20100331.
[707] This dialogue, however, cannot in any way be separated from the fact that the developer allegedly paid for half of the commission to muf.

Figure 57. Muf hoarding (right) juxtaposed with UC hoarding (left), July 2006. Source: muf

The project was of course temporary and what remains of it in terms of dialogue is hard to locate—if there is anything at all.[708] One of the biggest challenges of looking at dialogue and process, especially with muf's 'temporary accommodations'[709], turns out to be the lack of documentation available. The only material I found were photographs of the finished product and blurry photographs taken during one workshop, but no accurate record of the process nor the effect it had. Getting in touch with the two participating groups proved fruitless. The Lunch Club had disbanded and its organiser never responded to my calls or emails. The students had left the College two years previously and nobody could find the teacher responsible for liaising with muf. Excluding muf and Tracey McNulty, not a single person I met mentioned the hoarding project. The photographs of the installed hoarding stand in for the process and potential dialogue that is said to have happened.

SECOND HOARDING PROJECT

Leading up to the opening of phase one in 2007, muf were commissioned for a second hoarding project. This one boarded off the construction site for phase two with an image of woodlands foreshadowing the future arboretum. There was, in this project, no direct engagement with local residents. The only idea retained from the first hoarding project was intersecting the developer's hoarding (now Redrow) with something that might generate a dialogue as to the future of the Square. The project also included a full scale mock-up of the future stage on which the speeches for the opening ceremony were delivered.

[708] The first hoarding must have remained on site for a year until the end of the summer of 2006 or until Redrow had taken over and construction of phase one of the public realm started in January 2007.
[709] Muf, p. 12.

Figure 58. A class of students uses the stage steps. Photo: muf

Figure 59. Model for second hoarding project by muf. Photo: muf

The carnivalisation of the developer's hoarding and of the development, in this case, is much more subdued than in the first hoarding project. At the time, Redrow's hoarding were basically a larger rendering of their marketing iconography: slogans 'Talkin' 'bout regeneration' and 'Live, work, play, think… community' juxtaposed with computer renderings of phase two. While the Redrow hoarding and muf hoarding share the same medium they do not, as in the first hoarding project, act so distinctively as ambivalent counter-points. The shared dialogue between muf and Redrow here focuses on the aesthetics of regeneration. Both show an idea of what is to come but do it very differently: the developer by showing computer renderings, i.e. realistic images of the future project; muf by hinting at the atmosphere their design might offer but without any intention of being honest about its aesthetics. In fact the photos used for the hoarding recall some of muf's early conceptual sketches in which a dense wooded area opposed the civilised arcade (see Chapter 8). The initial card model for the hoarding project (Figure 59) is actually much closer to what the final arboretum looks like. The hoarding project as realised is thus pursuing the narrative of the forest, counter-point to the now completed civic square.

MODEL TOWN CENTRE EXHIBITION

The second hoarding project also marked the opening of the Model Town Centre exhibition. Muf was commissioned along with Kieran Long (former Barking resident, then editor of the *Architect's Journal*) to curate the exhibition that ran from 12 to 27 September 2007. The main features included models of regeneration projects in the Town Centre alongside models of heritage buildings, some still standing and some long demolished (Figure 60); fold out pamphlets inviting visitors to a self-guided tour of heritage sites and future development sites around the Town Centre; and a comments book asking visitors to write down their opinions and desires for Barking (Figure 61).

Figure 60. Model of the East Street swimming baths (built 1890s, demolished 1980s) here shown during a dance with sliding floor over the pool. Source: muf

It is on this comment book that we focus for the way it expresses an alternative engagement with local residents. As Sarah Butler, who collaborated with muf on the comments book, told me during our interview, this part of the project did not only involve leaving the book in the BLC gallery, but actively seeking conversations with visitors:

> We got people to write their impressions about the exhibition, the space, Barking. And we documented all of that and ended up with a kind of book. The Council must have it somewhere. A person was complaining about the colours of the buildings and I said 'did you know they are supposed to be spring colours and going through summer and autumn?' And then she was 'OK, I can now understand.' It's interesting to see that sometimes people don't know why…[710]

For Mark Brearley (DfL), the exhibition and the other parallel projects 'help the place and the people who are there', by 'getting a sense of celebration going.'[711] But it is not entirely clear who benefits from this sense of celebration. The 'people who are there' could as well

[710] INT20091001. Sarah Butler and Aoife Mannix worked together on this. According to Sarah, there would have been a series of three or four workshops with local students and residents to discuss possible occupation of the new buildings but I have found no evidence of this.
[711] INT20100727. At this point in our interview, I had the feeling Mark Brearley was giving answers along the official lines of DfL and the LDA.

be the developers, the designers or local residents. As Sarah Butler admitted, people seemed 'actually positive about the changes happening' but that 'well, they were people who elected to come to the exhibition so that was quite a select group.'[712] When viewed that way, the exhibition and its related activities seem more about softening the hard edge of regeneration, informing a select public under the guises of celebration. The risk of alternative approaches to engagement turned into policy is that they become yet another public relations tool to vehicle information and educate local residents on projects that are pre-determined before engagement takes place.[713]

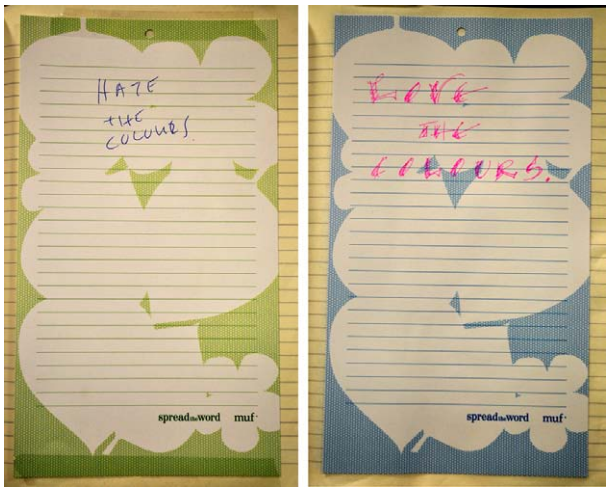

Figure 61. Exhibition comments: 'Hate the colours' and 'Love the colours.' Photo by author

Yet by suggesting another way of doing, the exhibition book and the conversations described by Sarah Butler are probably the closest critical interventions relating to direct engagement in the project. I eventually found the book at the bottom of a closet at LBBD Regeneration offices.[714] The collection was in no way extensive and there was no record of what was done with the collected information following the exhibition. While the exercise sets up the possibility for dialogical exchange, it does not effectively carnivalise the discourse of planning and regeneration. It falls outside the official design process and outside any planning application procedure without critically commenting on them or affecting their processes. What to do with the information collected is left to the discretion of the Council and the designers and there is no actual evidence of the exercise and its result having affected the design processes for muf or AHMM.[715] The exhibition makes room for ambivalence, equalising serious criticism ('Where are the flats people can afford?') with pleasantries and desires ('I wish for a chocolate museum!') on beautifully crafted pages

[712] INT20091001.
[713] Of particular interest on this matter are Jennie Coombs comments about consultation in Appendix O.
[714] Getting access to cupboards and filing cabinets, which may have been otherwise off limits, took quite a bit of time and extraordinary help and support from a few people.
[715] Planning permission had been granted for phase two in May 2007, four months before the exhibition took place.

as different voices, but seemingly never answers them. The exhibition, like the ceremony that marks its opening (see Chapter 1.1), does not appear to make room for the practical consequences of its own contradictions.

SECRET GARDEN AND FOLLY

At the same time muf started work on the first hoarding project, they were invited by the ACD to work on a project for Clockhouse Avenue (the street running parallel to the west side of Town Hall, see Map 5). The scheme started as a series of interventions along the side of Town Hall but eventually narrowed in on the triangular area across from the civic square and behind a loading area for East Street shops. The delivered project is a 7 metre high artificial ruin built out of reclaimed bricks and architectural material that muf refer to as the 'fourth façade' of the Town Square (Plates 91 and 92).[716] Katherine Clarke explains how the hoarding project and this new project evolved in relation to each other:

> The hoarding project became a way of thinking about ideas to do with a kind of mythologizing of place and constructing a kind of imaginary event with the public realm as a stage. So we inverted that and made a much more overt sort of *mise-en-scène* which didn't necessarily need to be occupied but stood for a potential mythology of the public realm. So that's where the idea of the ruin came from very simply.[717]

The idea of an artificial ruin within the Town Centre actually resonated, of course, with the push by the ACD in those years for work that addressed issues of heritage.[718] As Tracey McNulty mentioned, all artists working in the Town Centre at the time had the brief to 'make the heritage of the place seem more tangible' in opposition to the changes of regeneration.[719]

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[716] Katherine Clarke, INT20100331.
[717] INT20100331.
[718] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Public Arts Projects Initial Brief', 2004, sec. 2.
[719] INT20091019. I was never able to find a specific Clockhouse Avenue brief for muf (either in their files or at the LBBD) but we may assume they would have been given the same generic brief as all other artists making proposals in the Town Centre in December 2004.

Figure 62. Early model for the Folly project concealing the loading area at the back of East Street stores. Source: muf

The first rudimentary model of the project shows a literal take on the ruin idea. It appears as a credible stand-alone façade based on the architecture of Barking's Eastbury Manor (Figure 65). But as the project developed, the idea of using local heritage was obviously abandoned for an approach that favoured a collage of fragments from indeterminate provenance (Figure 63). Eventually, the material for the wall was sourced at an architectural salvage yard from unknown (or undisclosed) origins by Katherine Clarke and Peter Watson.

Figure 63. Rendering of the Folly before the acquisition of the architectural salvage pieces. Source: muf

Some local residents I spoke to wondered whether the wall should have referred more explicitly to local iconography. When I reported those comments to her, Katherine Clarke disagreed. For her, there is no specific local iconography, but a series of disparate pieces left over from slum clearances and Blitz bombings:

> It was much more about making [the wall] a *bricolage* of pieces so it didn't explicitly refer to anything. I don't think it was about celebrating the past

> necessarily. It was about celebrating texture and the capacity for things to fall apart. It wasn't about recreating a heritage icon.[720]

According to Katherine, the project is not about celebrating the past, but about making a statement about decay and time. Usually understood as, or argued to be, a commentary about regeneration and new development, the Folly actually turns out to be two-faced. As an insertion, the wall carnivalises the discourse of urban development and the discourse of local heritage simultaneously. Its ambivalence collapses both past and future, ruins and regeneration, authenticity and artificiality.

The project, Katherine explains, was always meant to stand in opposition to the development of Barking Central as a monument to disappearing craft.[721] Rather than express the *memento mori* repeated by Liza and Alison in relation to the future ruins of regeneration, the wall and its fabrication process here infer the loss of craftsmanship, marking the absence of something that used to be present, while still making a statement about the future. The development of the wall thus involved making room for expertise by seeking specific relationships. Students from the local masonry college, for example, made prototypes early on that helped in devising a design proposal. Shane Moss, the mason who eventually was hired to construct the final product, comments that if Katherine had a clear idea of what she wanted, she had no idea of technique.[722] And so a dialogue took place between them, Peter Watson, and structural engineers that centred on craft. Katherine comments:

> I think that's why [the wall] looks so odd because it was built from my lack of knowledge of that [craft] tradition and it was built on the skills of the bricklayers who brought their own interpretations as well.[723]

Their dialogue also touched on heritage and what Katherine identified as the 'loss of skills and craft and a sense of connection to place.'[724] It had actually been written in the bricklayers' contract that they were to have an organised visit to the Sir John Soane Museum. Katherine managed to find remaining bits of funding to hire a stretch limousine and take Shane, his colleague and Aaron (an apprentice from the masonry College) to the Museum (Figure 64). 'I thought that was really important', Katherine comments, 'that they had this moment of understanding that it wasn't about making a brick wall but that it was about making something else.'[725]

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[720] Katherine Clarke, INT20100526.
[721] INT20100526.
[722] INT20090928. For extensive notes on the fabrication process see Appendix Q.
[723] INT20100526.
[724] INT20100526.
[725] INT20100331.

Figure 64. Masons at the Sir John Soane Museum with Shane Moss in the middle. Photomontage by muf (original not found)

Speaking with Shane Moss I could sense that he was immensely proud of what they had accomplished, that indeed he had been working on a project 'outside of time' and different from the sort of craftsmanship required on modern projects, and, as he makes pointedly clear, in the interest of national and cultural heritage:

> Having the wall there… It was nice to be involved in something that was England, *old* England. That type of brickwork is what England is about, from years ago.[726]

During the development of the project, Katherine suggested making a film entitled 'Myth of Provenance' that would play on two parallel stories: one, the actual construction of the wall by the masons; and two, a mythical journey through regeneration sites in Barking and Dagenham featuring masons and project managers as satyrs.[727]

Figure 65. 'Satyr in front of Eastbury Manor'. Photomontage by muf.

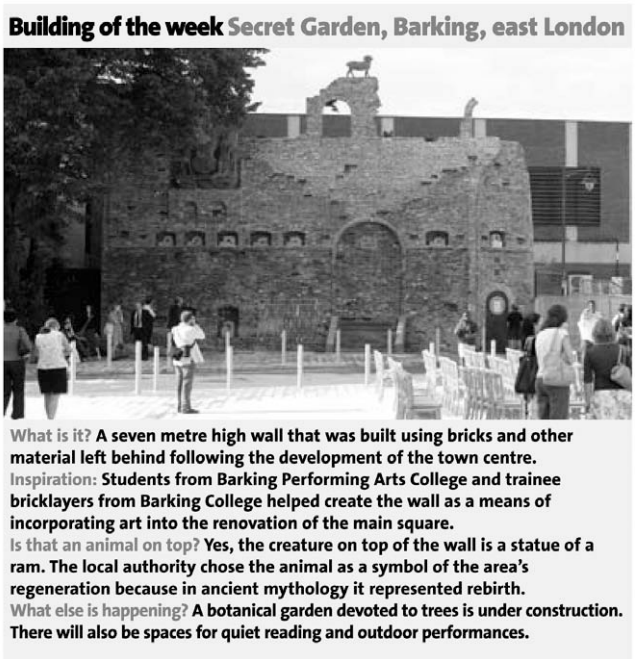
[726] INT20090928.

[727] The choice of the satyr is not explained by muf in any document I have found. There may be confusion, on the part of the artist, between the ram statue used for the head piece of the Folly and Roman satyrs which were depicted as half man half goat. Indeed, the storyboard for the film mistakenly mentions that satyrs are 'half man half ram'. How the mythology of the satyr, who is commonly related to Bacchus and Dionysus, a trickster, would be related to regeneration is again a possible misconception. In certain mythologies, the ram is connected with stability and rebirth which is more obvious. Apart, of course, for the idea that the Folly itself is a trickster.

The only trace of the film left is a storyboard made with photomontages (Figure 64 and Figure 65) to create the sequences in the journey of the satyr(s) starting from the Barking Riverside site of the LTGDC and ending with the Folly. As the satyr reaches the Folly and gazes up to the ram statue the camera climbs and peeks over the wall to 'reveal a family of satyrs living on the top platform' and the townscape of Barking as

> a series of choreographed simultaneous small and large scale performances promenade across the screen, a marching band, dancers, a simulated escape from the cells in the police station as well as everyday incidental events.[728]

In this unrealised project, the intentions of muf in creating a mythology of the public realm, starting with the first hoarding project, were to be reproduced. On split screen the film would have simultaneously brought together fact (masons shown building the actual wall) and fiction (the narrative of satyrs) and shown the wall as a fabricated *mise-en-scène* for public life both extraordinary and everyday. What instead happened, and what was acutely evidenced in interviews, workshops and media reports, is that the reproduction and description of the Folly in common knowledge continued the 'myth of provenance', creating a dialogue between fact and fiction and shrouding the project in ambivalence.



Building of the week Secret Garden, Barking, east London

What is it? **A seven metre high wall that was built using bricks and other material left behind following the development of the town centre.**
Inspiration: **Students from Barking Performing Arts College and trainee bricklayers from Barking College helped create the wall as a means of incorporating art into the renovation of the main square.**
Is that an animal on top? **Yes, the creature on top of the wall is a statue of a ram. The local authority chose the animal as a symbol of the area's regeneration because in ancient mythology it represented rebirth.**
What else is happening? **A botanical garden devoted to trees is under construction. There will also be spaces for quiet reading and outdoor performances.**

Figure 66. Extract from *New Start*, 21 September 2007.

It is indeed difficult to find an accurate account of how the Folly came to be constructed. Facts reported about it are usually blurry, fabricated, and sometimes contradictory. The above extract (Figure 66) is a perfect example of the myth of reproduction. Published just after the opening ceremony, it reports on a wall made up of reclaimed material 'left behind

[728] Muf architecture/art, 'Myth of Provenance Storyboard', 2008.

following the development of the town centre.'[729] The salvage material, as noted earlier, was in fact sourced indiscriminately and none of the material is thought to be local to Barking. 'Does anyone know why this wall has the Birmingham coat of arms on it?' asks an online reader referring to the massive stone carving on its upper left corner that reads 'forward'.[730] The extract from *New Start* further states that both students from the School of Performing Arts and apprentice bricklayers from Barking College helped create the wall leaving the details of their involvement to be inferred by the reader.[731] Sometimes the wall is even described as having been built by local students.[732] The College was indeed involved in making the mock-up panels and one apprentice was on site. But when I asked Shane Moss what the apprentice did, he replied that he had worked on a series of standard (invisible) pieces of wall between the façade and its steel structure. It seems that for most reporters on the project, saying that the wall was constructed by local students is impossible to pass on versus giving more accurate details of the selective and limited collaboration.

It is not only the process which is left partially unexplained or blurry, but the very nature and purpose of the Folly as a piece of public art is not made explicit. There is no plaque identifying the work (or its funders), which is in keeping with Katherine's expectations that people should not be looking for external references but should be inventing narratives for themselves. 'I think that the most difficult thing was making it look suitably ambiguous in terms of what it is representing.'[733] And so one of the most popular things to bring up about the wall for those who participated in the process was witnessing with amusement how people tried to decipher its meaning. Peter Watson: 'Even when we were building the wall people would come up and ask "what was there before, what was hiding it?" We're building this. "[But] it was never there before!"'[734] Shane Moss comments how the date stone would throw people off thinking it marked the age of the wall:

> Some people thought the wall was original because they hadn't explored what was behind it. One comment was from an architect. They had gone past the wall before and had seen it with the scaffolding. So when the

[729] 'Building of the Week', *New Start*, 21 September 2007. Also an article in *The Recorder* from 2007 begins by stating the ruin was made from material found during excavation. Only after does it say that this is what the Council would have you believe and explains that it was built from salvage material and reclaimed bricks, but never actually tells the reader where the material came from.
[730]Reader comment on Tom Turner, 'Public Art in Barking Town Square', *Garden Visit* <http://www.gardenvisit.com/blog/2008/09/30/public-art-in-barking-town-square> [accessed 16 December 2011].
[731] In my workshop with the Urban Design Forum one resident explained to the others that local students had helped in its construction without mentioning what that involvement was.
[732] See for example Homer; and Moore, 'How Barking Is This?'.
[733] Katherine Clarke, INT20100526.
[734] INT20100419.

> scaffolding came down they commented they thought we had done a good job at restoring it![735]

I was also surprised as to how many local residents did not know whether the wall was new or old, if they had missed it before, or whether it had been moved from another part of the Borough. For a while, in interviews, I would answer questions and fill in gaps. After a while, without making a conscious effort, I would leave those gaps unfilled, those connections loose and leave them to make up their own stories—complicit in the art work. In such an example, I am speaking with Naomi who has lived in the Borough for twelve years. After condemning the buildings of Barking Central as science-fiction, cold, unreal, and characterless, she describes how she clings on to the wall, a piece of heritage that the Borough has yet to knock down:

> When I go there I make sure I look at the ram. Did you notice that? They haven't knocked that down. I just hope they don't. If I want to have that good feeling when I'm there I turn around and say 'oh there you are, don't you move!' Then I turn around and go 'oh God!'[736]

Alison Crawshaw recalls with a smirk how somebody once gave her a 'very hostile phone call about the wall':

> This was an artist doing work in Barking calling Katherine's wall some sort of postmodern joke and accusing us of being part of the whole regeneration of the town centre.[737]

Although it was certainly meant as negative criticism, I do not think, in this case, that 'postmodern joke' is such a negative or inappropriate denominator for the Folly. To understand the Folly as something entirely serious would miss the point and rid the work of its ambivalence. The designers are answerable to this position that can lead the Vicar of St Margaret's Church to condemn the Folly as 'morally corrupt'[738], or for awkward ironic moments when invented narratives confront lived history.[739] It is this ambivalence, as I see it, that in some cases relieves, and, in others, brings out the contradictions of past and future, loss and hope, heritage and regeneration. As suggested by the concept of practical ambivalence, it does so not in shock, but in laughter.

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[735] Shane Moss, INT20090928.
[736] INT20100420C.
[737] INT20091026.
[738] This is according to Fenna Wagenaar (INT20091021B) and her reported discussion with the Vicar.
[739] One day, while I was taking photos of the Folly, an old man approached me and introduced himself asking whether I was interested in history. After telling me his story as a Chindit soldier in the Second World War, he handed me a photocopied article from 1946 signed 'to my friend' and told me to go and spread the story.

BARKING METAMORPHOSIS

> The Barking metamorphosis has begun! If you are a resident in the area, look out for a troop of well-dressed design students carrying chairs, a writer taking pictures, young theatre practitioners writing poetry, and a primary school class inventing mythical forests.
>
> Yemisi Blake[740]

The final parallel project to be evaluated in this chapter is one that encompasses aspects from the previous projects and details and, consequently, the issues they raise with respect to practical ambivalence. Starting in October 2008, muf collaborated with Sarah Butler, the RCA (Jurgen Bey and his students from Platform 2) and the BLC library on a project intended to mark the planned completion of the arboretum three months later. Tracey McNulty had given both muf and Spread the Word funds to animate the new Square and the two had decided to pool their money together into the single Metamorphosis project.[741] Barking Metamorphosis is actually a series of activities that overlapped during that three-month period. Two major threads make up the project and overlap in workshops ran by Sarah Butler. The first is the work of Platform 2 students (directed by Jurgen Bey and muf), who worked primarily on Barking-specific chairs. Second is the work of Sarah Butler which included running workshops with local students, the RCA and Yemisi Blake, writer-in-residence at the BLC library.[742]

All Metamorphosis activities took the conceptual connection between the library and the arboretum as a starting point.[743] Sarah Butler's application for funding lists some of the principle goals of the project: to explore the relationship and potential connections between the two public spaces of the arboretum and the library; and to generate creative work by local residents that foster appropriation and a sense of ownership for participants and local communities.[744] Furthermore, the project addressed social concerns in Barking, which were brought to light by new developments and the transformation of the area, by making the theme of the workshops 'the forest in literature as a place of transformation', as stated by Sarah Butler.[745]

Metamorphosis raises interesting questions for dialogical design for a range of aspects: the interaction of diverse participants including local residents; the production of

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[740] 'Acid Rain Eating Monkeys - the Childlike Ability', *Barking Metamorphosis*, 2008 <http://barkingmetamorphosis.wordpress.com> [accessed 12 December 2011].
[741] Sarah Butler, INT20091001.
[742] Yemisi's tasks involved engaging with visitors to the BLC, participating in the workshops organised by Sarah Butler and producing a piece of writing based on the work of RCA students.
[743] Muf's idea about the 'literary arboretum' was one of the reasons behind their collaboration with Spread the Word. Sarah Butler (INT20091001) admitted she thought Liza wanted her to act as a sort of broker between the library and the designers.
[744] Sarah Butler, 'Metamorphosis Eranda Application', 2008.
[745] INT20091001.

temporary artefacts for the Town Square and the library (Figure 69); the design and installation of a permanent small chair in the arboretum; or the dissemination of information via alternative channels (the use of the internet, for example, allowed the project to have an afterlife beyond the immediacy of engagement). The overall project mixed design, art and engagement with avowed goals of empowering critical social relationships (appropriation, ownership, collaboration, conviviality, etc.), but also ran into interactive, relational and timing difficulties that may be characteristic of this approach.

The first stage of the project was an assignment to RCA students who each had to design a chair inspired by site research, the basis of which had to be an object found in Barking (Figure 67).[746] Jurgen Bey says that, although they supported students engaging with the local community, they did not necessarily push for it, believing that the location of these artefacts in the public space between library and Town Square was enough of a direction if students wished to engage.[747] The timing of the assignment meant that all chairs were designed and produced before the first workshop with local students.[748] So the chairs were not influenced by these interactions but were later used as the basis for a booklet produced by Yemisi that mixed the result of workshops with the work of the RCA students (Figure 68). Yemisi describes '9' as the catalogue to 'a fake exhibition about real things.'[749]

Figure 67. Chairs by RCA students outside the main entrance to the BLC. Source: muf

[746] Merel Karhof, INT20100527.
[747] INT20100625.
[748] On 11 November 2008, the day of the first workshop, the Barking Metamorphosis blog reads that six chairs are already in the BLC with three more on their way. Yemisi Blake, 'Barking Metamorphosis', *Barking Metamorphosis*, 2008 <http://barkingmetamorphosis.wordpress.com/2008/11/11/barking-metamorphosis/> [accessed 20 August 2012].
[749] INT20091021A.

Figure 68. '9' booklet cover and pages 11-12. Photo by author

Two RCA students, Bethan Wood and Lucia Massari, also created a Writer's Room for the interior of the BLC (Figure 69). Their brief called for a 'project-base' for the development which could support workshops.[750] It appears workshops were instead held in the gallery and it is unclear what activities actually took place in the Writer's Room. Sarah says that the placement of the room was a contentious point in the library. Librarians could not agree on where the thing should go[751] and the administration of the BLC kept bringing up health and safety issues and pragmatics that made negotiation much more complex. 'I spent quite a lot of time sweet-talking everybody', Sarah comments.

> Liza would come in and say 'we'll put that here!' and I would go (in a diplomatic tone) 'well, you know, we can talk about it.' There was a lot of negotiating that needed to be done.[752]

In the end, the Writer's Room was located on the ground floor of the BLC at the halfway point between its two entrances. The placement appears a muddled compromise between the need for the room to be visible and accessible (for Yemisi to 'write in public' and increase his potential engagement with the publics of the library) and the desire to create an intimate place within a library 'lacking intimacy.'[753] The brief also had ambitions for the finished product to be moveable, stating that 'it is critical that ultimately it is able to move outside into the arboretum.'[754] Eventually, a version of Bethan's flooring was installed in the arboretum, but the Writer's Room was not moved as is.

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[750] Muf architecture/art, 'The Temporary Reading Room', 2008.
[751] Comments were collected to that effect in the brief given to RCA students. Muf architecture/art, 'The Temporary Reading Room'.
[752] INT20091001.
[753] Sarah Butler, INT20091001.
[754] Muf architecture/art, 'The Temporary Reading Room'.

Figure 69. Writer's Room as installed on the ground floor of the BLC. Present are Yemisi Blake (red shirt), RCA students (first from left and centre), and students from Gascoigne Primary. This photo looks as though it has been staged since workshops with students took place in the gallery. Source: <http://barkingmetamorphosis.wordpress.com>

The workshops took place between 11 November and 25 November. Eight workshops were planned at the start, two with young students, four with teenagers and two with adults.[755] In the end, only four of these took place, two with students from Gascoigne elementary school and two others with teenagers from the ARC, a local performing arts school located in the recently renovated Malthouse building. In each of these Yemisi and RCA students were involved. In the first pair of workshops, RCA students made props for Gascoigne students to use in creating stories about forests. The workshops generated positive feedback from the students involved, some commenting directly on the Metamorphosis blog. Overall it seems that all students were quite excited about acting and writing out stories and all disappointed by the short time allocated for the activity. In the second pair of workshops, ARC students wrote short plays on the theme of the forest, again with Yemisi and RCA students taking part. These workshops, unlike those with Gascoigne Primary, did not take place at the BLC but at Malthouse, weakening the connections between regeneration, the Town Square, the library and Metamorphosis.[756]

Writing in December 2008, librarian Denise Lovelace comments on the final days of the project:

> Working here at BLC, I have seen that the Writer's Room has attracted a lot of attention here. Some positive, some not so much, but always honest! It have been a pleasure to work with Yemisi and Sarah, Barking

[755] Muf architecture/art, 'The Temporary Reading Room'.
[756] I was briefly in touch with somebody at ARC who had facilitated the workshop, but they could not put me in touch with former students or the tutor who had taken part. No comments accompanied the evaluation form or were posted to the blog.

> really is changing fast, and our hope that BLC should be at the heart of change in the area is beginning to be realised.[757]

Her comment is toned down, however, during our interview where she deplores the duration of these activities and their effectiveness. This sentiment was also expressed by Yemisi who explains the situation:

> It was hard to know what to say to people. 'Hi, I have a residency here around architecture and design and forest. What do you think of the library?' You know what I mean? I had a few conversations with people but I'll be totally honest there was big pressure… I had 5 to 8 days. In a normal residency you would have those experience days and then you'd go away and write something but that was just my time so I had to experience and write then. That's what they had budgeted for. So it was a compromise between 'shit I want to speak to people' and 'I have to write this thing by the end.'[758]

Sarah Butler also shows frustration as she reflects on the project and its duration. 'If you go into a community and try to get some engagement with people you just can't do that [in a short term].'[759] The difficult time and budgetary constraints meant that the project was not as effective as she would have liked in the first place. It involved fewer participants and only short term engagement. Denise Lovelace also questions the diversity of the participants, suggesting that these projects would be more successful if they brought people together of different ages and backgrounds:

> Other age groups would've loved it! Yemisi was very engaging. And he would have learned a lot from them. But they just bring in children. It's not all about children…
>
> Jean Brown: We do love children!
>
> Denise Lovelace: Of course we do![760]

The initial project description did aim to engage with different age groups including the elderly. Four workshops were dropped probably due to time and budgetary restrictions. Yet even with the activities that did take place, Sarah notes that the different groups, the kids, the RCA, and Yemisi, did not 'gel' together as much as was hoped for. As Yemisi above, she also attributes this effect to the short duration of the project and its tight budget.[761]

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[757] 'The Writer's Room, by Gascoigne Primary School', *Barking Metamorphosis*, 2008 <http://barkingmetamorphosis.wordpress.com> [accessed 12 December 2011]. Comment posted by librarian Denise Lovelace on 9 December 2008.
[758] INT20091021A.
[759] INT20091001.
[760] Denise Lovelace and Jean Brown, INT20100218.
[761] INT20091001.

Figure 70. Thomas Pausz's project for a post box at Town Square. On the left are the cards asking residents for their desired location for the post box, and on the right Denise Lovelace is being photographed holding the toy post box on the Square. Source: <http://barkingmetamorphosis.wordpress.com>

A few projects by RCA students did push for further engagement. Thomas Pausz's project took the form of a 'campaign' for a new post box to be placed at Town Square underlined by ideas of intergenerational communication. Cards were left in the BLC inviting visitors to choose a location for the post box and write comments. But it seems as though the project never developed further.[762] Again, Denise Lovelace (showing support on Figure 70) expresses her disappointment at the lost opportunity:

> It should have appealed to all generations. […] And it never happened! That would have been an ideal opportunity to engage the community. And what happened? We got a beach, we got an ice rink, salsa dancing.[763]

As part of her project, Merel Karhof collected the 'fossils of Barking' by casting moulds of found ornamentation. The moulds were eventually grafted onto her chair project (white chair in the middle of Figure 67) and a series of ceramic plates were adorned with one of the moulded ornaments and its related story. On the Platform 2 website, Merel writes that she has the intention of organising a yearly dinner in the arboretum where residents of Barking are invited to eat from these plates, permanently stored in the BLC.[764] This, as she writes, would create a link between arboretum and library. When I interviewed her, she admitted these dinners unfortunately never happened and the plates are not at the BLC, but that she had approached the Barking Apprentice restaurant who might be interested in showcasing the plates. This also never materialised.

What did happen is that both Merel and Bethan were approached by muf to design a permanent installation for the arboretum. The commissioned work combines two things:

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[762] Thomas Pausz's own website has very little on the project. <http://pausz.org> [consulted 14 December 2011]

[763] INT20100218.

[764] Merel Karhof, 'Fossils of Barking', *Platform Two* <http://platformtworca.wordpress.com/introduction/fossils-of-barking/> [accessed 26 May 2010]. Images of finished plates including the printed stories can be seen on Merel's personal website at <http://merelkarhof.nl> [accessed 15 December 2011].

a chair designed by Merel two-thirds the size of a normal chair (according to specifications given by Alison) and a version of the floor Bethan had designed for the Writer's Room (Plate 93). The chair installed in the arboretum is a metal cast structure with wood seating and back. The metal sides are cast with a pell-mell assortment of Merel's moulds. The initial idea, as Merel explains, was that the wooden seat would be engraved with a map showing the location of the original ornaments in Barking, thus establishing a connection between the artefact and its context. Due to budgetary restrictions, however, the engraving was never done. During my interview with Merel you could sense her disappointment at the absence of a link between the chair, the library and the history of Barking:

> It's a pity sometimes that because there is not enough money things are not taken to the end. I think that for this arboretum there was going to be a link with the people who live there…. Now there is a chair, and maybe it looks nice, but it doesn't tell the story I wanted.[765]

Without those links the patterns on the chair are reduced to patterns, seemingly unconnected to local heritage. Denise Lovelace brings up Merel's initial chair saying that people were 'walking past it in the library and missing what it was.' She continues:

> People won't pick it up unless it's pointed out to them, will they? If these projects are going to be done they might need to be highlighted, publicised if you like. The chair project didn't mean anything to older residents unless it was pointed out to them.
>
> TBK: Those mouldings are on the small chair in the arboretum but—
>
> DL: But who knows that? You don't know unless somebody tells you. And the residents don't.[766]

Even local historian Mark Watson, who had helped Merel in the early stages of her mould-making project, had not been notified that the work had evolved into a permanent installation in the new Town Square. Unlike the Folly, the ornamentation on the arboretum chair is sourced from local heritage. Yet without the connection between artefact and heritage firmly established and soon disappearing (local residents who were involved in the project are in no position to transfer the information) the knowledge runs the risk of being lost. During our interview, after describing how the connections might never be established, Merel wonders whether local residents will instead create their own myths and stories about the origin and meaning of the patterns. This is essentially what Katherine argues for the Folly—the argument about craft notwithstanding—but unlike the Folly, the chair was never intended as a carnivalising feature and Merel's voice betrays a sort of hopelessness and disbelief at the idea.

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[765] Merel Karhof, INT20100527.
[766] INT20100218.

When I first encountered the Metamorphosis project, it appeared a successful exercise in mixing design, art and public engagement. However, the project as it was described to me by its participants seems to have suffered from certain deficiencies. Most people agree that its timing was somewhat odd. Planned as a celebration of the link between the library and the arboretum, the project could only base itself on abstract notions of space since it paralleled the construction of phase two, rather than mark its completion. The arboretum, rather than opening in January 2009, opened nine months later. 'The projects we were doing with Yemisi were quite abstract', laments Sarah Butler, 'because it was all informed by the idea of the arboretum but it wasn't open.'[767] The work of RCA students was exhibited in the BLC gallery as part of the opening in September 2009, but without any serious public engagement activities (except for temporary table tennis). Sarah rightfully comments on the difficulty of engaging people with abstract notions and that there is unfortunate emphasis on doing this type of project before developments are completed.[768] Engaging with local residents and potential users to discuss space that is still an abstraction creates a rift in communication. It is telling, for that matter, that none of the comments received from local students participating in Metamorphosis involved references to the future space but concentrated on the more concrete activities of acting, filming and writing.[769]

Another point is that the only permanent installation to come out of Metamorphosis, the small chair and terrazzo circle in the arboretum, in the end fails to create a link between heritage and regeneration because the stories it might have revealed are left untold—let alone the initial conceptual link between the library and the new Town Square. The installation does mean, however, that something permanent came out of the project. Loose connections are certainly easier to re-establish in the future—as opposed to generating the funds needed for the initial fabrication—so the afterlife of the project may hold something positive. Because it mixed physical fabrication with digital dissemination, Metamorphosis still has a presence on the internet, though not on the LLBD's own website, but rather on the project blog, Yemisi Blake's websites, muf's website, Urban Words and Spread the Word (both Sarah Butler), RCA Platform Two blog, and the various personal websites of RCA students who took part in the project.[770]

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[767] INT20091001.
[768] INT20091001.
[769] I was able to find these comment sheets on a desk at the LBBD ACD deparment.
[770] Yemisi's '9' booklet also has a certain presence in the project's afterlife. Copies were scattered in the BLC gallery during the 2011 Molten Festival when the gallery held an exhibition of heritage photographs from the Valence House archives mixed with photographs of recent and future development projects in and around the Town Centre.

A final and unanimously identified problem in the process was lack of time. While some comments deplored the short time put toward production (to write, film or act), Sarah and Yemisi both point out that perhaps the biggest issue with time constraint was the inability to establish meaningful relationships between participants and would-be participants in the local communities.[771] It does not appear that there was interaction, for example, between Gascoigne Primary students and students from the ARC. The intergenerational dialogue hoped for in the funding application as a way to address social issues in the Borough never took place. This was certainly something Denise Lovelace felt strongly about, hoping that the dialogue of the project might be challenged by other voices. With little time, it would appear, the project's intention as a 'temporary accommodation of other voices', to use muf's expression, could not be extensively developed. In other words, Metamorphosis' potential for polyphony and heteroglossia could not be fully exploited.

ALL SYSTEMS LEAK

> Dialogue, like allegory, bears the imprint of its own failure. In its expectation of an answer back, dialogue recognizes its inherent instability and incapacity for absolute signification.
>
> Tim Beasley-Murray, *Mikhail Bakhtin and Walter Benjamin*[772]

The above ambiguous details and counter-narratives raise a number of issues with respect to practical ambivalence. As we just saw with Metamorphosis, these can be quite practical and symptomatic of design processes like establishing concrete links between actions, their result and their desired effect, negotiating difficult relationships or having enough time to invest in making relationships in the first place. Overall, the most relevant moments happened when intentions for 'open-endedness' were challenged (sometimes by their own mechanism for ambiguity) in ways that revealed the dialogical nature of design beyond any methodological or systemic claims. When, for example, contradictions between design and use, management or interpretation, appeared unexpected or unwelcome to those who set up the processes in the first place (for example trampling in the arboretum, table tennis, the Folly as a postmodern joke, or the difficult relations between some Metamorphosis participants). One of the better examples of this from my interviews was when I asked Liza Fior to explain what she got out of her exposure to other voices and publics. She first answered, ambiguously, that it 'gave resonance' to the project. When I asked her what she

[771] Yet, echoing muf's comment that collaboration is about making relationships rather than making the thing, Sarah admits that one of the most positive things about the project has been the relationships she was able to create between the library, muf and herself.
[772] Beasley-Murray, p. 131.

meant, she continued by giving the example of the small chair designed by Merel and Bethan, the physical marker of the Metamorphosis project on site:

> You know the funny little chair that Alison loathes, I don't hate it. I'm glad there are things that don't quite have our stamp on it. The little chair in a way stands in for that class of children. It gives another voice to the work, although we remain complete control freaks.[773]

Not only is the chair the end point of a dialogue with the participants in Metamorphosis, but it is also the expression of a much more loaded (and answerable) dialogue between the designers themselves on how far are they willing to open up the process and its results to others.[774] During my research it appeared that even systems for practical ambivalence in design, as the one characterised by the intentions and methods of muf, were subject to the ambivalence between authority and its subversion. That is, all methods can be carnivalised and 'all systems leak'.[775] Ambivalence between design authorship (to be answerable) and the willingness for laying the grounds for its challenge, however different or unexpected, recognises the risk for potential voices that may confirm, contradict or even ridicule the initial conceptions of design. This idea is the subject of the following chapter, which closes Part III.

[773] INT20101207.

[774] Merel Karhof was given precise dimensions for the chair by Alison Crawshaw who was the one who decided where the finished product would be installed at Town Square. It is also not clear, contrary to what Liza implies, how the small chair does not have 'muf's stamp' on it. If we compare the chair to the ceramic bench at Stoke (Figure 54 in Chapter 3.2), for example, it is clear how the Barking chair could fit within muf's aesthetics (notwithstanding the process of fabrication which at Stoke was part of the conceptual grounding for the object).

[775] Attributed to Edward Sapir in Clark and Holquist, p. 14.

Plate 89

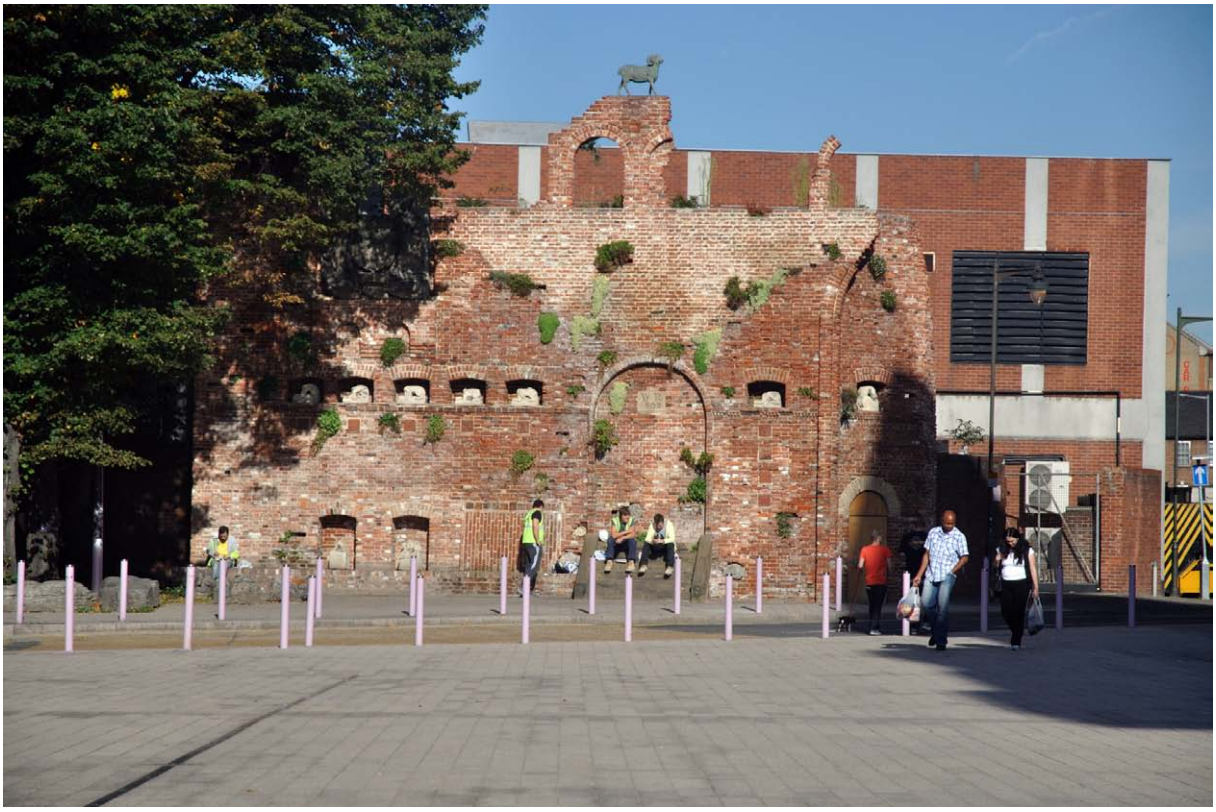
Balustrade detail (top) and installation of new balustrade behind small chair, July 2012.

Plate 90

Fallen trees, August 2011.

Plate 91

Folly with construction workers from Ardmore, September 2009.



10am. Four construction workers are eating their lunch on the steps of the Folly Wall. I get up and approach them. They tell me they are working on the new development. Two of them barely speak, the third is a bit more loquacious and says he's worked on a few of the new buildings. I ask him if any of them are from Barking. 'No! North London. And mostly Ukrainian and Polish.' I ask them what they think about the buildings. He misunderstands and says: 'It's a shit hole.' He means Barking. 'I don't understand why anybody would want to come live here. But the flats are nice.' He goes on telling me that I really have to see it at night to appreciate how terrible the place is. I ask him if he's seen people using the Square a lot. 'Not really', he says, sitting on the steps of the Folly Wall enjoying the sun.

FN20090925.

Plate 92

Folly and loading dock, September 2009 (top) and November 2009.

Plate 93

Small arboretum chair, April 2010 (top) and September 2009 (bottom).

3.4 SPACE FOR LAUGHTER

> Every act in world history was accompanied by a laughing chorus.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin[776]

> In English there is a phrase, 'room for doubt', meaning that there are some questions that do not have a 'yes' or 'no' answer and that there is a space of doubt, of questioning. I think for us success can be measured in the confidence we have *not* to give a simple answer but give space for that uncertainty.
>
> muf, *This Is What We Do*[777]

This final chapter to Part III reviews some of the principal aspects of practical ambivalence as it has been developed in the preceding three chapters, and offers some thoughts on the close of Chapter 12 about the difficulty of turning practical ambivalence into a system. In 'We need artists' ways of doing things', muf collaborator Katherine Shonfield called for the need to integrate art methods into regeneration processes. 'Socially aware community art', she writes, allows for the complexity and contradictions of regeneration to surface and be articulated. 'Community art is so important to the regeneration process just because we know we will hear that rare thing: the authentic voice of the community.'[778]

Figure 71. *Pumpkin Logic* installation by muf. Two hundred carved pumpkins were placed on the parvis of the Birmingham convention centre. Photo: muf

While Shonfield puts the emphasis on voice, her aim is slightly off mark since she supports the notion of 'authentic voice'. Even in her review of *Pumpkin Logic* by muf (Figure 71 and Figure 72), an installation meant to carnivalise a summit on urban regeneration in Birmingham, it is difficult to understand how the voice of the community actually makes

[776] *Rabelais and His World* (Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 474.
[777] Muf, p. 213.
[778] Vaughn Williams, p. 224.

its way into the process. The point is that there is no authentic voice for the community as there is no authentic voice for regeneration. The voice of the community represented by pumpkins is no more authentic than the artist speaking on behalf of a group of local residents. The practical ambivalence of the project though is not in the integration of authentic voices, but in parodying a dialogue that is not taking place. The installation laughingly reveals what is absent from the process by carnivalising the dialogue of the conference. The pumpkins, as it were, are the laughing chorus of regeneration.

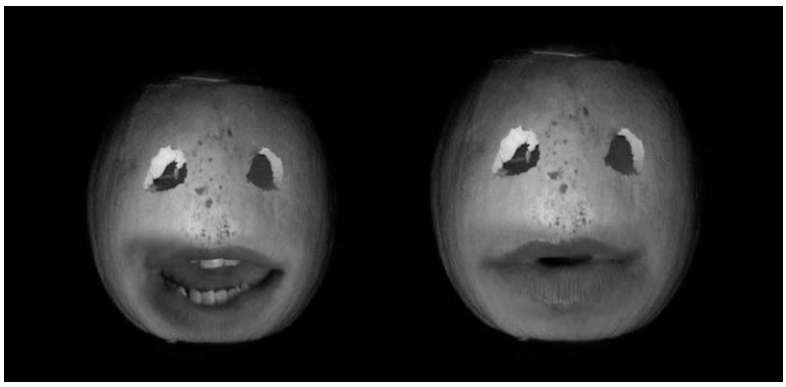


Figure 72. *Pumpkin Logic* video by muf. An interior installation showing local artists as pumpkins speaking on the relationship between art and regeneration. Source: muf

The common thread that runs through Part III is the belief, common to muf's practice and the policies of the LBBD ACD, in the potential for practical ambivalence to result in better planning and design, and, more precisely within the bounds of my research, to result in the unification of dialogic publics and spatial heteroglossia into a proposal for making public space. In the case of both policy and practice, this is expressed as the integration of public art and artists in standard processes as well as in the blurring of disciplinary boundaries. This brings uncertainty and risk to processes intent on predictable outcomes so that their ends are not predetermined but the results of dialogues. The same allowances also reveal the ambiguities and imbalances of these processes, the disproportionate weight of political, social or financial voices, their conflicts and their shifting identities. As shown, dialogism can frame these ideas and serve to describe an architectonics of design based on relationships, alterity, unfinalisability, the answerability of each participant and actor, and the mutual equivalence of the ethical and the aesthetic and the social and the spatial. Furthermore, it can also serve as a framework for practice when these principles are used as the basis for action. The ambivalence of dialogue then becomes practical and can act to reveal or affect relationships, expand or overlap boundaries and carnivalise monologic authority.

If the architectural process is a narrative, then practical ambivalence is its mechanism of laughter by which it is disrupted and made different, reveals hidden voices

and integrates others, allowing contradictions to co-exist. It is how difficult questions are raised that normally would not be raised, yet without necessarily providing a resolution: what Julia Kristeva refers to as 'harmony with transformative rupture'[779] or what muf called 'room for doubt' in the above epigraph. Practical ambivalence can be argued to raise those difficult questions defined by Richardson and Connelly about the relationship between development processes and society, but in a way that is outside the boundaries of the discourse of participation in architecture and planning. Mechanisms should be put in place, they argue, that are relevant to each particular situation, which may change with the process and make room for uncertainty and possible conflict.[780] Consensus is neither possible nor desirable, and it is the oversight of participatory methods (like consultation) to aim for general applicability without conflict. Less emphasis is put on the quality of its process and outcome; more on a simplified version of the mechanism itself. Tracey McNulty could not hide her frustration with formulaic consultation methods during our interview:

> They fill a room with all these exhibition boards, they put a couple people with communications backgrounds and they invite the wider public to come in and comment on these designs and these people have had no briefing on what they are looking at and then they say 'we've consulted with the community!' They haven't consulted. All they've done is overwhelm a group of people who don't know what they're looking at and don't understand the impact of this little white model.[781]

The relationship between practical ambivalence and the integration of other voices in design thus implies two principal things.

First, a flexible approach that focuses on the appropriateness of engagement in a given situation, sometimes within a single project. For example, to understand the approach taken at Town Square as a single participatory practice or method is misleading. If we look at the overall process, especially in relation to the peripheral projects, we find that there is not one but several practices all with varying degrees of direct and indirect engagement, varying relationships (for example between muf, craftsmen and students, or between Sarah Butler and visitors to A Model Town Centre), and, as muf themselves recognise, varying degrees of exclusion. Might we not read the statement 'each occupied chair also represents another interested party who is not there'[782] as a prospective self-criticism of the ceremonial gilt chairs of September 2007?

The second aspect is an approach that welcomes uncertainty, especially with respect to the outcome of the process or the way meaning is constructed for the aesthetic

[779] Kristeva, p. 464. My translation.
[780] Richardson and Connelly, p. 80.
[781] INT20091019.
[782] Muf, p. 11.

object. This uncertainty was emphasised continuously in my interviews with muf by the indiscriminate use of the adjective 'open' in relation to both processes and objects. More than an emphasis on the reciprocity of the ethical and the aesthetic in design work, this use of the adjective appears to signify an overwhelmingly positive ideological (democratic) principle. In the same way that it is hard to argue against an 'open mind', it becomes hard to argue against 'open design'. As we saw from both theory and case study, openness implies a range of things including hermeneutic ambivalence, free interpretation, accessible and inclusive processes, transformation, self-criticism, uncertainty, and of course spatial and temporal continuity or unfinalisability. All these aspects in a way reflect the belief (or ideology) that creative processes are and should be founded on democratic ideals, that every individual person and every public has the capacity to act and affect the ways in which the things of this world are produced and reproduced.

In the following quote, Alison Crawshaw expresses her belief that muf's 'open-ended' work at Town Square reflects an ethical position *vis-à-vis* the totalising logic of urban development and regeneration. She has just finished describing the balustrade as an open-ended detail and I ask her whether there is such a principle at work in the whole project:

> I suppose there is an open-endedness… You know it's a bit of a critique. It asks questions, doesn't it? The fact that the ruin wall is facing new cladding like a memento mori and saying 'what do you think about regeneration?' That opens things up because you build a big development asserting that this is the way things are, then you put things around that question it and it sort of opens up the meaning of the whole place.[783]

When I told Katherine Clarke that a local resident had suggested that with respect to the Folly they would have appreciated a statue of a fisherman more than anything else she replied:

> The statue stands in a very simplistic way for a way of saying 'I'm committed to tradition' whereas the wall maybe says 'I'm not sure whether I'm committed to tradition or not.'[784]

With respect to processes she suggests that openness resides in the dialogue between various experts which in turn can influence the resulting outcome. But this does not, as she notes, change the fact that there is always an expected outcome—however open is the process:

> I don't know whether it's disingenuous to say the process is open-ended because it's closed as far as there is an expected outcome. But I do think that there is a degree of openness in terms of the inclusion of expertise,

[783] INT20100929.
[784] INT20100526.

> whether that's the expertise of living in the place and being seventeen or knowing how to make bricks. I think also there is that sense of 'what can you bring' if you're a participant in the project. What they bring can shape the project. Perhaps this is mirrored in the outcome… Unlike the statue of the fisherman it isn't easily consumed and it isn't obvious what it's trying to tell you.[785]

Openness here means that the process has the possibility of dialogically feeding back onto itself. In the same way that identity is performed (or becomes) through dialogue, so does the design process become through dialogue and engagement. As Sarah Butler says, 'there is no point in having a conversation if it's not going to have an impact.'[786] Yet during the same interview you can sense her hesitation on the appropriateness of engagement in the first place. She wonders how to genuinely engage a community in an honest and realistic way before saying:

> I use all these terms: involvement, engagement, consultation. But why do you want to talk to these people in the first place? 'You know, I have a great idea. We're going to put an arboretum in Barking. End of story.' I'm getting to that point where… I don't know.[787]

What Sarah's comment leads to is that when engagement is brought up as generally good and universally applicable, its edifice is certain to crumble under inevitable contradictions. Practical ambivalence does not guarantee better design processes and objects but sets up the possibility for it. What is crucial is how a project articulates this ambivalence. That is, making room for doubt is not enough because there will always be a varying degree of criticality between the multiple methods, actions and elements of a single project. Attention has to be given to the quality of the making and the quality of the room so as to evaluate the benefits and effectiveness of the doubt. The review of ambiguous details and counter-narratives at Town Square raises the issue of how close to official processes the mechanisms of ambivalence can be while remaining effective. Or in other words, how critical can practical ambivalence be when it is supported by the authorities it also seeks to bring into crisis? Muf, for example, desperately want the Folly to be the 'laughing chorus' of Barking Central. Yet the project is funded and approved by both the LBBD and the LTGDC who in turn support the larger development unambiguously. During our second interview, Liza wonders whether it is possible to be openly subversive while still meeting her client's demands and recalls a recent job interview where the issue came up:

> Yesterday I was interviewed for a job and I did very badly. There was Hackney and Tower Hamlets, and the journalist Kieran Long said 'what I like about your work is the way that you start critically.' And I was like

[785] Katherine Clarke, INT20100526.
[786] INT20091001.
[787] INT20091001.

> [making censuring gestures with her hand]: 'Ha ha! We love working with local authorities!' Funny really, but a disaster for the interview. I'm sure I didn't get the job.[788]

On the one hand this anecdote highlights the importance given to relationships and their influence on the architectural project. On the other it reiterates the belief that clients, in this case local councils, would reject any form of critical approach. Critical and participatory practices are indeed aimed at challenging the monologue of authority, an authority that is sometimes paradoxically involved in setting up the possibility for this kind of practice in the first place.[789] A model for practical ambivalence would theoretically support a process that makes room for self-reflection and critique, but examples like the development of Community Architecture, show that once the destabilising forces of heteroglossia have been co-opted by authority, its potential for ambivalence diminishes. The critical aspects of the Town Square project, especially the peripheral projects, arise from government-supported schemes and ideas that stand in opposition to market forces, which are paradoxically supported by the same government. Such carnival, which is made official and branded, soon loses its edge. Dialogue and ambivalence indeed have radical roots, but also may find their edges blunted, monologised, against the centripetal forces of authorities. Again it is the quality and effectiveness of the space for doubt that matters rather than its mere existence. Whether architect, artist, planner, developer, Council official, public or local resident, each authority must be able to laugh at their own conceptions with the help of others.

[788] INT20100219.

[789] As in the case of Community Architecture with the economic and housing policies of the early 1980s Conservative UK government. Or, in the case of the Town Square, between muf's practice and the policies of the Urban Renaissance and Sustainable Communities plan.

Plate 94

Through the Planned Cities Fire Will Rage exhibition at the BLC Gallery, July 2010.
The work is by local students (year 10/11) done during a workshop with artist Laura Oldfield Ford.

Plate 95

Secret Garden and Folly, April 2010.

TBK: What do you think about the brick wall?

Denise Lovelace and Jean Brown: The Folly?

JB: Well it stopped the drugs and the drunks being over there, because that's all you could see from anywhere. That was the drug corner, and drunks used to sleep there. Now there is no seating. It's quite attractive I think... They got the dates wrong, though. We couldn't figure out why they picked that date!

INT20100218.

During my visits to the site I routinely saw men use the secret garden to have a quiet drink, have a smoke or pee.

Plate 96

Town Square during Molten Festival, September 2010.

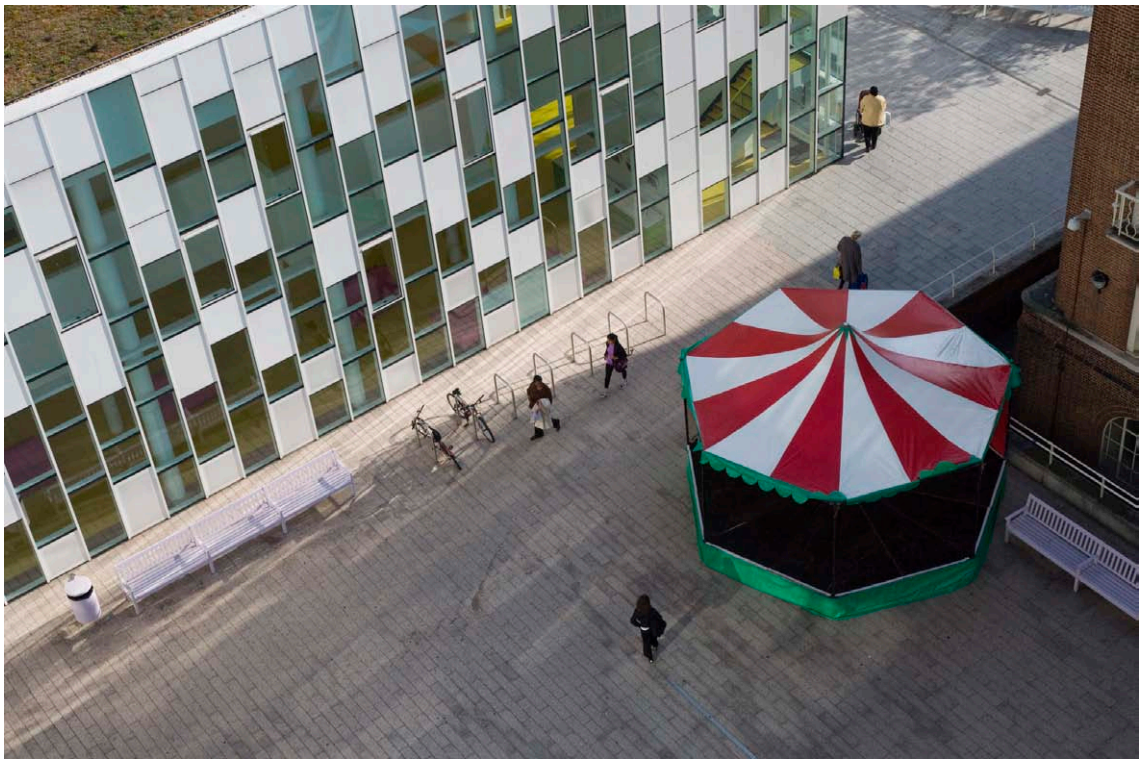


Plate 97

Dancing in the arboretum and the 'fragile ecologies' during Molten Festival, September 2010.

CONCLUSION

> There is neither a first nor a last word and there are no limits to the dialogic context (it extends into the boundless past and the boundless future). Even past meanings, that is, those born in the dialogue of past centuries, can never be stable (finalized, ended once and for all)—they will always change (be renewed) in the process of subsequent, future development of the dialogue.
>
> Mikhail Bakhtin[790]

From an initial intention to study how social and spatial relationships are defined in the design process for public space, the form and content of this thesis have evolved continuously according to dialogues between participants, local residents, archival documents, experience of the place and theory. Emphasis shifted continuously between design, ethics, aesthetics, authorship, indeterminacy, political theory, public space, dialectics, dialogism, first-hand experience, methodologies… sometimes giving me the impression one would be *the* defining aspect of the final work. With each supervisory meeting, in which this shifting emphasis was considered, a new structure for the thesis appeared to emerge, in turn giving new form to the material. Eventually it appeared that all of these were inflections of the same project, different genres and tones, as it were, of the overall dialogue of the thesis. It was only after having written the bulk of the three parts that an overall schema emerged that would have been impossible to state early on: this thesis has been an investigation into the architectonics of designing public space.

WHO WHAT HOW

As research developed, the thesis came to be structured on the three questions of who, what and how: three dialogues that helped to focus the material found, or generated, during fieldwork, as well as the most appropriate paths through dialogic theory.

Part I explored how the identity of participants in the production and reproduction of the Town Square project, or of any design process, could be framed according to alterity and heteroglossia. Its argument served to undermine the idea that participants engaged in the process could have a fixed identity independent of others or of time. That is, that individuals or publics could exist as uniform, homogeneous entities. The evidence showed that, according to the dialogic principle of alterity, no entity could be conceived independently of the relations it had with others in the process. Individuals and publics existed in a constant state of becoming, their identity dialogically formed over time. The

[790] Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology', p. 170.

architect, the Council or the public were all, in this case, 'fictional unities' if they were not situated in the immediate context of dialogue.[791] This was especially apparent in the case of groups and publics who appeared to constantly challenge their own projected uniformity (either from within or from without), as with the Council, the elderly, the residents of Barking Central or the publics of the Town Square. Again evidence showed complex heterogeneity and contradictions within groups routinely represented as homogeneous entities. This relationship between projected conceptions and the reality of each individual or group was framed using the concept of social heteroglossia. Publics existed ambivalently as the result of a dialogue between two things: first, valued conceptions of the other—the invention of community for which the speaker is responsible; and second, the everyday 'gross reality'[792] of individuals or groups that either stabilised or destabilised these valued conceptions. One of the most significant consequences for design, as we saw, was the problematic conception of a single public for the Town Square, especially when this conception was linked to claims of public engagement.

Part II developed the aesthetic and spatial implications of Bakhtinian concepts to show that the social heteroglossia from Part I could be re-interpreted as spatial heteroglossia. Public space, in this sense, became the spatial production of a 'polyphonic landscape'[793], or the various non-neutral dialogues between its publics—including of course those involved in its design. A few principles derived from this. First, similarly to the identity of participants in the project, public space cannot be conceived outside of its relations to other public spaces; evaluating the Town Square made no sense outside of its relations to Barcelona, London, or the Barking Town Centre. Second, that every public space expressed the particular dialogues of its conception situated in space and time as chronotopes: the LTGDC, 100PS programme or Barking's Victorian heritage. And third, that these chronotopes, sometimes expressing ideal conceptions sometimes dialogical processes, were stabilised or destabilised in the everyday uses and management of the particular place. Again, public space appeared to exist ambivalently between our conceptions and the reality of its continuing socio-spatial production. Thus the significance of the Town Square, above all, resides in the fact that it reifies many of the contradictions inherent to the concept of a *town square* in contemporary England.

Part III finally looked at how the ambivalence explored in Part I and II is negotiated in practice. Starting from methods expressed in the Town Square project—both

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[791] As Adrian Forty's description of the user in *Words and Buildings* (p. 312): 'Describing them simply as "the users" strips them, or any sub-group of them, of their discordant, non-conformist particularities, and gives them a homogeneous - and fictional - unity.'
[792] From Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', p. 42.
[793] After Folch-Serra.

in muf's practice and in the policies of the LBBD—it developed a framework for a dialogic theory of design based on the blurring and overlap of boundaries (especially between art and architecture), social engagement (including collaboration and participation), spatial indeterminacy (including unfinalisability), the reciprocity between the ethical and the aesthetic, individual responsibility and the uncertainty and risks of dialogue. When turned into bases for action, this described 'practical ambivalence', further framed by carnival's active challenge to monologic authority and the critical trope of laughter. The thread running through these ideas is that practical ambivalence (for example the blurring of disciplinary boundaries between art and architecture) results in the resolution between the idea of unity and fragmentation[794], between ideal conceptions and their challenge, or, more specifically for my research, between ideal publics and social heteroglossia or between ideal space and spatial heteroglossia. What was revealed in research was that ambivalence and dialogue united ideas suggesting that neither the precepts of social engagement nor those of 'open' spatial design could be too dogmatic—lest very real socio-spatial or political inequalities be glossed over.[795] Conversely, dialogue or ambivalence elevated into abstract ideals (either in policy or practice) run the risk of being nothing more than monologues dogged by the same problems that they initially set out to resolve.[796]

OBSERVATIONS

Principal observations

It seems remarkable, after having investigated their relationship in this project, that no closer connections between Bakhtin and architecture had ever been established. While Bakhtin never directly addressed architecture, the potential for the latter to be understood and negotiated through a dialogical framework became increasingly strong as my research developed. Not in the facile relationship between architectonics and construction[797], but in the myriad opportunities that open up when we start thinking architecture in terms of dialogue, negotiation, processes and objects, ethics and aesthetics, responsibility, social and spatial production, authorship, co-existing contradictions, ambivalence… While the intent of my research was always to discuss socio-spatial relationships, public space and design, its results could not have been expected from the start—especially not within the original framework of assemblage and multiple case studies. In hindsight, its development now appears to have been predicated on an experiment: let's see what happens when Bakhtin

[794] Beasley-Murray.
[795] For example Highmore; Richardson and Connelly; or Blundell Jones, Petrescu and Till.
[796] As in the exchange between Claire Bishop and Grant Kester and its critique by Kim Charnley.
[797] See for example Michael Holquist's comment in Bakhtin, 'Art and Answerability', p. xxiii.

and Barking meet in the same space for the first time. This space eventually filled with other voices to generate a polyphonic dialogue including those of speakers in architecture, art, urbanism, political theory and, of course, my own.

The relevance of dialogic theory to design grew exponentially during research. Most significantly, in relation to the topic, with the idea that dialogue represents a socio-spatial or ethical-aesthetic paradigm for public space and design; that it can describe the identity of participants and publics according to both their ideal conception and their embodied reality; that it can describe public space as a phenomenon produced by social heteroglossia and different practices, also according to ideal conceptions and everyday experience; and finally, that it can describe the activity of designing and conceiving public space—honing in on individual actions and their implied answerability so there would be indeed 'no alibi in designing'—as well as to suggest a practical framework for its design. Furthermore, as research advanced, what appeared to be most critical in these aspects of the thesis coming forward was the prevailing sense of ambivalence inherent to dialogue. Ambivalence, the quality of being both one thing and the other, the allowance for co-existing contradictions, appeared as the structuring element of the thesis: identity, public space and its design found meaning not in unified abstractions but in the relationships that exist between their ideal conceptions and their concrete realities.

Several related observations can be made with respect to the research and the questions it raised. One of the most significant, I found, resulted from the spatiality of the concept of dialogue. Architecture, especially when it addresses public space or social issues, can be thought of as a negotiation of boundaries. As seen, these boundaries can be spatial, social, contractual, conceptual and so forth, so that we may express the relationship between architecture and dialogue in a pastiche from Gardiner: rather than delineate sharply between particular realms of social activity and forms of public space—between, for instance, public and private, design authority and user agency, theory and practice, ethics and aesthetics—dialogue problematises such demarcations, sees them as fluid, permeable and always contested, and alerts us to the power relations that are involved in any such exercise of boundary-maintenance or negotiation.[798] Boundary-maintenance does indeed occur, as we saw in each of the three parts, every time a line is drawn against ambivalence.

The relation between abstract conceptions and everyday reality was acutely felt in research given the context of regeneration and the Town Square. The project was indeed never given as an 'aesthetic object' but worked at by a number of different actors, the polyphonic landscape of ideological, cultural, social or political voices that made up its

[798] Adapted from Gardiner, 'Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums', p. 30.

non-neutral dialogues. Each person interviewed, each organisation, each policy or regeneration document represented a particular conception of the project inseparable from others or from the everyday reality of the place that stabilised and destabilised them. The ability, in research, to move between these two poles was crucial in uncovering the omitted elements or quiet voices in the 'tidy narratives'[799] of authorities whether designers, politicians, regeneration officials or, of course, local residents.

In this sense, we might observe the relevance of dialogue as a framework for participant research. That is, because it stresses the importance of situated exchanges and relationships in the creation of knowledge, the concept of dialogue can also—like the self-reflexivity of ethnographic accounts—bring attention to the role of the researcher in the process of investigation. Not only were the identities of my informants changing in time with the research but I was constantly aware of my influence on the result of our encounters, either in the form of a negotiation in conversation, of information circling back into further encounters (like Liza Fior showing me the slides from a lecture she just did without realising that some of the photographs were those I had sent her a few months ago) or, quite significantly, how my own reproduction of the Town Square was acutely dependent on the information given to me by a specific set of individuals and organisations. The circular issue of method here is that observation framed by dialogue constantly raises questions about the dialogical process of investigation itself.[800]

One of the most significant examples of this during my research has been my relationship with muf. Dialogical investigation, both as participant research and writing practice, has had the effect of turning the firm's own rhetoric on itself. What I found interesting during research was how most critiques of the Town Square seemed to be based on distant observations, relied on given official information, and only lightly scratched the surface of the architectonics of the project as reported by the firm.[801] This is something I had to be constantly aware of during my project, balancing personal proximity and a necessary exotopic distance. Yet being able to follow the firm for almost four years, observing the project on site, having access to material and events that would normally be off-limits, and perhaps most importantly speaking with others connected to the project, has allowed insight into the very contradictions of practicing ambivalence, something impossible with superficial studies or short dialogical exchanges. The muf collaborators, in this sense, became voices among the other voices being assembled in the dialogue of this

[799] Liza Fior, INT20100219, as quoted in Chapter 3.2.
[800] See for example Hajdukowski-Ahmed, IV and methodology section in the introduction.
[801] See for example Sörstedt; Woodman; Galilee; and Homer.

thesis. Something highly relevant, I found, when developing my own critique of the firm's practice based on the concepts of carnival ambivalence and laughter.

Beyond the immediate contribution of the thesis to the field of architecture and urban design (establishing relationships between dialogic theory, identity, public space and design into a dialogic framework), the thesis itself represents a way of working dialogically, a mode of research practice that seeks to incorporate some of the consequences of practical ambivalence. For example, one of the principal aspects of following ethnographic methods combined with dialogic theory has been a particular way of dealing with uncertainty. On the one hand, the uncertainty of developing research methods at the same time as the case study was itself developing. But also, on the other, the uncertainty in assembling the dialogue of the thesis itself: a dialogue that each new interview, each unfolding event, each discovered document and each authorial decision has the potential of significantly inflecting. This way of working had the advantage, over the course of this research project, of repeatedly situating me within a developing dialogue rather than at an ideal vantage point from the outside.

Finally, with respect to the crafting of the thesis, I have found that the writing phase of my research could not be separated from the analysis and evaluation of the gathered material. It was important to discover, while writing, that the form and definition of the thesis took shape as relationships were established between the various voices and texts, most of them not my own. That is, the dialogical framework being developed for design and public space applied to my own research project. The different texts of the thesis (particularly interviews and photographs) each have their own distance from original emic accounts (see footnote 52 in the introduction) and thus imply different relations between myself and other people. Much like moments described in the design process, my own writing practice and the developing text of the thesis showed different moments of loosening and tightening with regards to this distance and these relations: a lesson, as it were, in the ethical deliberation between inclusion and exclusion, and in the inevitable exotopy that marks any creative act, including writing and design. What was fascinating, with regards to this exotopy, was how my own voice, recorded in interviews and fieldwork material, became the voice of another during transcription, analysis or rewriting.[802] On this note, it is important to comment on the different chronotopes of the thesis.

During writing I became acutely aware of the different chronotopes of research and how these intermingled in the developing text. Not only was there an overall chronotope

[802] Hence the footnote references to fieldnotes where passages were used and the use of the name TBK to identify the researcher in interviews excerpts. This was astutely noted by a colleague at the UCL Centre for the Advancement of Learning and Teaching (CALT) who thought my method of transcription and note taking made me strangely stand 'outside myself'.

of the thesis and research project, but there were numerous embedded chronotopes expressing interviews and site visits, or particular moments of writing. The spatiotemporal aspects of the thesis, in this sense, are far from linear, and part of the craft of working through its dialogue has involved making careful relations between various chronotopes (for example the discussion of public participation by Mayor Fairbrass in 2010 in Chapter 1.4 or comments made by muf on use, maintenance and occupation in Chapters 2.4 and 3.3). The chronotope, in this sense, is both an analytical tool as well as a writing and design tool.

Challenges

Of course my research did not develop without challenges; nor did the dialogue between Bakhtin and Barking consistently produce positive or relevant exchanges. Perhaps one of the most positive dialogical aspects of the research also turned out to be one of its most problematic. The Town Square was, for the duration of my own project, in a constant state of becoming and so the object of study could hardly be frozen as a chronotope. This meant that a difficult decision had to be taken about where or when to draw the line, when to stop doing interviews and when to stop visiting the site.[803] In terms of methods this also raised problems because these had to be adapted and developed with respect to a number of evolving parameters. As mentioned, the focus of the research changed a few times (between ethics, design, political theory, etc.) and this was reflected in my interviews. Semi-structured interviews were a good place to start to generate material, but as my research developed, the goal of these interviews changed (with my skills as an interviewer) reflecting changes in the tone of the thesis, its aim or an immediate specific concern. Furthermore, and as was also noted in the introduction, some of my endeavours in fieldwork resulted only in marginal material. My interactive installation for Cities Methodologies[804] (Plate 99) and my workshop for the Architecture Foundation's Barking Urban Pioneers programme[805] (Plate 101) are two examples of exercises whose potential did not fully develop as I had expected—my own lessons, as it were, in the difficulties of public engagement.

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[803] I did interviews up to December 2011, having reached what I felt to be the appropriate amount of material and after having pursued others for a year, like Kieran Long and Rob Whiteman, without successfully setting up an interview. At time of writing, my last two visits to the Town Square were in December 2011 and July 2012.

[804] My installation brought Barking to Central London in the form of an assemblage of texts exposing research findings and quotes from interviews and asked visitors to leave their own comments that were then added to the array.

[805] My workshop focused on writing as a creative method to explore urban public space. Together with the participants (aged 15-17) we devised narratives taking place at Town Square that would then be enacted on site and turned into a *fait divers* in the form of a short newspaper article posted on the programme's blog. The details of engagement were negotiated between Tom Keeley (Architecture Foundation), Liza Fior and myself.

While fieldwork and interviews otherwise generated a richness of material, one major drawback of dialogic theory, as already mentioned in the thesis, is its insistence at times on the minute details of processes. It becomes excruciatingly difficult, for example, to locate every possible observation in its immediate context, every possible quote in the larger context (physical and verbal) of the interviews since decisions have to be made continuously to stop specific dialogues or reduce a dialogical exchange to a representative sentence. In this sense, one of the biggest challenges of this thesis, as mentioned in its introduction, has been dealing with the transposition of verbal recordings and fieldnotes into an academic text. Bakhtin, in his theory of language, speaks of the *superaddressee* as the third party that is always present in any communicative exchange.[806] The superaddressee is the ideal public of the exchange as imagined by each of its participants. In writing this thesis, I found that over and above my dialogues with the other gathered voices stood the superaddressee of academic writing within an institution. At many times this influenced decisions made to rewrite fieldnotes (in a tidier genre), quote indirectly, or build sections of the argument with short quotations rather than lengthy passages from interviews. This superaddressee played the role of counter-balance versus my developing dialogical practice, and in the future I would expect this relationship to be fully explored and accommodated in the production of my research work.

One concern with dialogism as a theoretical framework that emerged during the course of the project was realising the difference between acknowledging that valued relationships are turned into form through design, and specifically describing what these values are or which relationships have more influence than others. There is a difference between acknowledging that entities are defined by their relationships to others, and again, specifically evaluating what these relationships are. An architectonics of public space and design may suggest that 'there are voices in everything and dialogical relations among them'[807] but it does not in any way suggest that one particular position is worse than others—apart of course from those positions that deny dialogue. But dialogue in itself has no positive intrinsic value. It may well be, from the French expression, *un dialogue de sourds*. Even Tracey McNulty, who supported collaboration wholeheartedly, recognised that a particular type of dialogue, in this case participation by local residents, in no way guarantees the success of the work.[808] Or, as was exposed in Part III, muf's contradictory stance between opening up design to other voices and dialogue and remaining 'complete control

[806] Bakhtin, 'The Problem of the Text', p. 126.
[807] Bakhtin, 'Toward a Methodology'.
[808] INT20091019.

freaks'[809]. The conundrum for this thesis, then, has been the recognition that when dialogue is turned into the basis for practice (that design should be dialogical, that practical ambivalence produces better public spaces) another series of questions and issues come up concerning the evaluation of such a practice. While Chapter 12 explored some implications in the Town Square project, it would be interesting to explore the more normative side of practical ambivalence in my own practice, something which was not within the scope of this thesis, but may well be lying ahead.

Potential avenues

One of the most frustrating yet enticing aspects of doing this research has been that not all emerging threads between dialogism, public space and design could be followed. While emphasis was put on ambivalence and dialogue as conceptual frameworks for inter-subjective identity, public space and design, other potential relationships were either briefly visited or remain unexplored terrain for further research. One such avenue is, perhaps not surprisingly, the relationship between dialogism and architecture in its general sense rather than the specific case of public space or the even more specific case of the Barking Town Square. Taking this thesis further should involve the application of its research and evaluation methods to other case studies given that the results of this thesis seem to indicate a significant potential for dialogism to be generally applicable in the case of architectural design and research. It would be interesting to see, for example, what questions would be raised if the case study were a single family home or if the studied design practice made no claim suggesting potential links with practical ambivalence or dialogue. What might be significant, in these cases, is how the dialogical investigation could remain descriptive and analytical, while the critical side of practical ambivalence could be brought out in the practice of research itself and the assembly of the final document. In other words, further research projects could make practical use of the lessons learned in the dialogue between Bakhtin and muf.

With respect to the 'grain' of fieldwork mentioned above it would also be interesting to push the discourse analysis side of the material generated in interviews, building the project, as it were, entirely from the voices of others. While the designers did meet for numerous interviews and I was given access to their files, it would have been interesting to be a witness to the process from the start, perhaps on a shorter project, in studio, design meetings or client meetings so as to treat the project as dialogic public space. This could actually support one of the most positive aspects of doing this type of analysis

[809] Liza Fior, INT20101207. Also Katherine Clarke on the importance of the *auteur* (INT20100526) and Alison Crawshaw's idiosyncratic precision with the arboretum's planting scheme (INT20100929).

as I have experienced it in this project, that is being able to follow processes as they develop in space and time. This is in keeping with the idea that the negotiation taking place during a project generates its own kind of public space worthy of investigation (for example disagreements within muf about the occupation of the Town Square). It would also allow for the chronotopes of the case study to relate actively with those of research.

Furthermore, the connection between Bakhtin's linguistic theories and the widespread interest in the relationship between architecture, language and text appears like an area begging for exploration.[810] It would be worthwhile, following from this, to explore the potential connections between dialogism, as a theoretical framework, and related models like assemblage theory or actor-network theory. Their relational aspects certainly resonate together and the insistence in dialogism for the primacy of language and the human being would certainly throw questions to horizontal ontologies when it comes to understanding individual responsibility, the experience of the everyday or the relevance of the aesthetic object.

Yet another avenue for further research is the relationship between architecture and narrative. Given the interest for narrative in architecture, models such as Bakhtin's seem particularly relevant, especially where there is interest in the construction of meaning, or in the unfinalised interaction between multiple actors. Finally, this research showed how ambivalence can activate the social and political potential of architecture. While here it focused on occurrences within the Town Square project and muf's work, this idea begs to be extrapolated to the canon of architectural history. That is, the ambivalence in Bakhtinian dialogism could be related to other theories of ambivalence perhaps already established in architecture (for example Venturi, Rowe and Koetter, or Tigerman[811]) to generate a different reading of the canon. More precisely on the social and political potential of architecture, however, an interesting line of research could be laughter and its critical potential. When I asked Liza Fior, in the last lecture I saw her give in London, about the idea of laughter in muf's work, there was a sense that the uncomfortable line of the 'postmodern joke'[812] had been breached.[813] Yet Bakhtinian laughter, much like Benjaminian

[810] As per William Whyte's approach in 'How Do Buildings Mean?'
[811] Stanley Tigerman, *Schlepping Through Ambivalence: Essays on an American Architectural Condition*, ed. by Emmanuel Petit (Yale University Press, 2011). Particularly interesting given the relationship between Tigerman's work and dialogism (in this case Martin Buber).
[812] Alison Crawshaw, INT20091026 and Chapter 3.4.
[813] She was presenting at the Royal Academy alongside Richard Wilson on the topic of 'ruptures and dislocations', 13 February 2012. I did not record the presentation, but her immediate reaction to my question was something along the lines of 'you mean that it's all a joke?'

shock, needs to be recognised as a (paradoxically) serious trope in architecture; especially if we recognise, as Bakhtin does, that 'irony has penetrated all languages of modern times.'[814]

Coming to the end of this research project the possible paths for future research are visibly many. There appears to be, as Bakhtin writes, 'no last word'. Hopefully this thesis has been an incitement for further utterances so that indeed the conversation between architecture and dialogism continues unfinalised into unpredictable and uncertain, but revealing and rewarding, territory.

[814] 'Irony has penetrated all languages of modern times; it has penetrated into all words and forms. Irony is everywhere-from the minimal and imperceptible, to the loud, which borders on laughter.' M. M. Bakhtin, 'From Notes Made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), p. 132. Also see the forthcoming book by Emmanuel Petit, *Irony, Or, the Self-Critical Opacity of Postmodern Architecture* (Yale University Press, 2013).

EPILOGUE: THE THREE LAMPS OF BARKING

Figure 73. The three lamps on The Broadway in front of The George Inn, c1900. Source: Valence House

Peter Midlane and I are standing at the top of the bell tower of St Margaret's church, looking north toward the Town Square and the station, the buildings of Barking Central a colourful backdrop to the Town Hall clock tower (Plate 102). It is market day on East Street, bright stalls lining up toward Blake's Corner. Peter points toward something close by, on Abbey Green, just before the Broadway and a few metres away from the Curfew Tower, Barking's oldest standing structure. 'The lamppost you see there is a modern version, well modern…it's a 70 year old replacement.' The lamppost he is pointing to is a wrought iron post standing on a stone plinth and supporting three lamps (Plate 103). Peter continues: 'There were always three lamps in this area where people used to meet and congregate. "Meet me at the three lamps." It was the traditional meeting place.' The original lamps stood at the meeting of the Broadway and Axe Street, in front of the George Inn (Figure 73), replaced with their modern version in the early twentieth-century during the 'regeneration' of the area (slum clearances and the town's move northward to the station). This one was eventually moved to its present location near the Curfew Tower when the streets were remodelled and widened (around the mid-1960s or early 1970s). Joyce Petchey agrees with Peter Midlane: 'I would say actually, if there was ever a meeting place it was there.' She remembers the glow of the lamps in the early darkness of the winter, on the way to the market then located outside the Curfew Tower where Barking's first Town Hall once stood. Jumping in after his wife, Ron Petchey adds: 'All the elders of the parish used to arraign around there, gather round and just talk about this and the other.' It was there, for example, in 1895, that a meeting of the Social Democratic Federation was held and Tom Legget, the anarchist, spoke in the evening 'not at all particular about the

refinement of his expressions' as 'the crowd appeared intensely amused throughout.'[815] It was also there that in 1904 the union of gas workers met to rally.[816] More than a landmark and meeting place, it was the local Speaker's Corner, significantly located at the town's busiest crossroad rather than in front of the old Town Hall farther down the road and chosen as a gathering place even after the building of the 1894 new Town Hall and the gradual shift of the town northward.

Nearly forgotten as a local chronotope, the three lamps is Barking's prototypal ambivalent public space. It is there, we might say, that the dialogues of this thesis took place… multiple voices both extraordinary and everyday speaking under the three lamps of alterity, spatial heteroglossia and practical ambivalence. We can also read its chronotope in present manifestations of spatial heteroglossia in the Town Centre. It is at Blake's Corner, the Town Centre's busiest intersection and the only place where I witnessed impromptu public speaking, that the bandstand was erected, both a popular landmark ('Meet me at the bandstand'[817]) and a 'nightmare to manage' for the local authorities.[818] After the bandstand's demolition, the chronotope reappears closer to the Town Hall at Town Square, but only as a design intention, with lampposts fitted with power and data outlets to increase flexibility and appropriation, hoping that the stage becomes a fourth plinth[819] and the arboretum a 'fantasy Town Hall'.[820] Meanwhile back on the high street in April 2010… I reach the market but the BNP canvassers have already left. Police officers are still patrolling. At Blake's Corner a group of young men—the other half of the earlier clash—have hoisted themselves on electrical boxes. A small crowd gathers around them as they chant: 'No hate in Barking!' Looking around me, echoes from the three lamps: 'the crowd appeared intensely amused throughout.'[821]

[815] 'Not in Hyde Park', *Barking East Ham & Ilford Advertiser*, 11 May 1895.
[816] 'Trade Union Meeting Under the Lamps in Barking', *Barking East Ham & Ilford Advertiser*, 13 August 1904.
[817] Sumeyra Mor, INT20100420A; and Naomi, INT20100420C.
[818] Lorraine Pulham, WRK20100921.
[819] Fred Manson, INT20091009.
[820] Fior, 'Barking Town Square: Brief Disobedience'.
[821] 'Not in Hyde Park'.

Plate 98

Alley between Ropeworks and electric station with marketing placcard, April 2010.

'The award-winning Barking Central Development is now officially complete.

...The Barking Central look divides opinion, but architects and critics have given it awards.

...Here's what some residents in Barking thought about the finished Barking Central Development.

> Umar Mirza: "I like the space around here. I live nearby and think it's pleasant enough."
>
> Paul Fisher: "The BLC is good but I would have liked to see more council homes built in Barking."
>
> Catrina Ablitt: "I am surprised it's finished as I think it looks disgusting. There are too many colours on the buildings and I don't like the design."
>
> Tommy Wane: "It smells funny and I don't really like the design and colours - it is too much in a small space.""

'Barking Central Is Complete', *TheNews*, 29 May 2010, p. 3.

Plate 99

Barking from Without installation at Cities Methodologies, May 2010.

Plate 100

We Did That workshop with the Barking Urban Pioneers, March 2010.

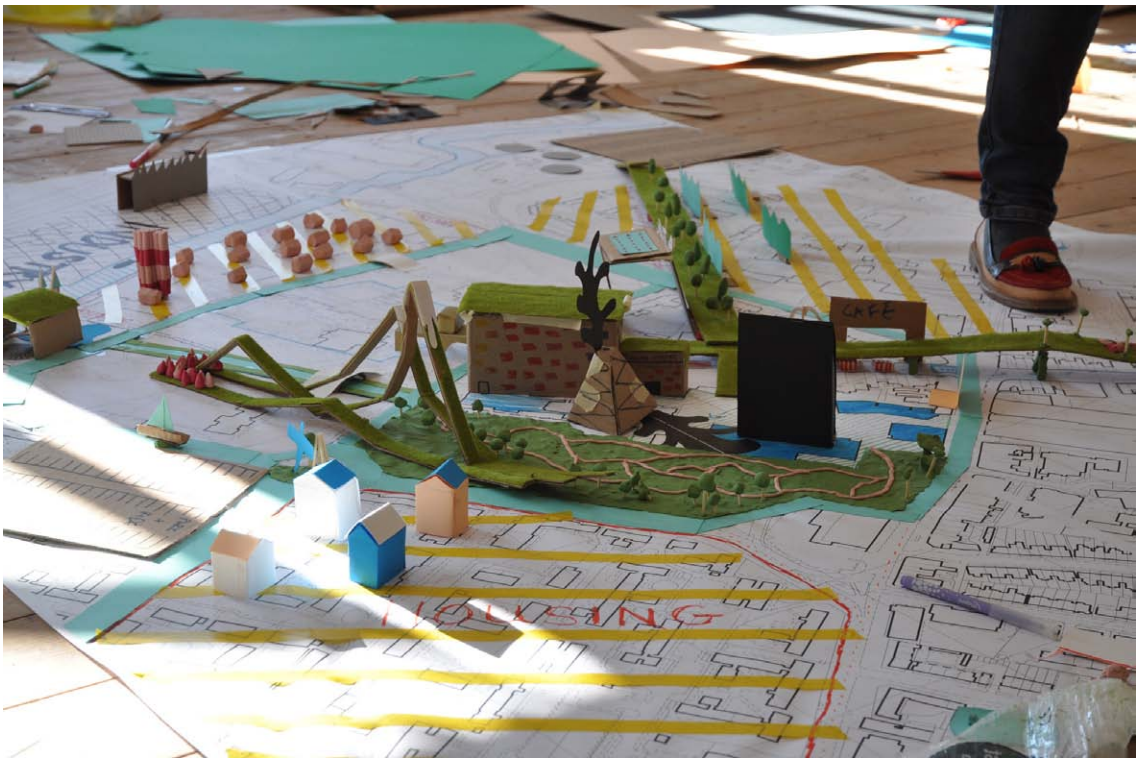

Plate 101

Workshop with the Barking Urban Pioneers, March 2010.

'Peter Johns decided to carry on his grandparent's mission to fight for changes in Barking. He climbed to the top of the Town Hall of his own will insisting that he would starve himself to death or jump off the building until a decision is made whether to replace the Town Hall building with a shopping centre. "It's either this building gets knock down or I'll die trying", says Peter Johns. There almost seems to be a war happening in the Town Square as some people are in disagreement and some in agreement with the proposed changes. Even with Mr Johns stunt changes are still uncertain.'

"'A shopping mall or no Town Hall" says Peter Johns',
<http://www.urbanpioneers.org.uk/barking/>.

Plate 102

View from St Margaret's church toward Town Hall, September 2009.

The Song of Barking

by Henry Carey, c1730

Let Barking's ancient glory
Be told in song and story
In long and lasting lays
With hearts and voices joining
In gladsome song combining
We sing her deathly praise...

Plate 103

The three lamps, November 2009.

APPENDIX

CONTENT

A. DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

A selection of some of the voices of the thesis and those who played a major role in my fieldwork.

Abidin, Zoinul Director of the Barking Central Library (2007-). Just before his appointment he had been manager of the Tower Hamlets Ideas Store and a Clore fellow (2006-7). From a 2007 lecture, Zoinul's leadership tips: develop personal values, lead by example, break rules, take risks, communicate vision and values, be visionary. Zoinul succeeded to Nazeem Ullah as BLC Director in 2010-2011.

Alexander, Jeanne First elected to the LBBD Assembly in 1990 representing Abbey ward for the Labour Party. She was re-elected in 2010 but this time for Eastbury ward. The move was allegedly forced by the Party who sought Muslim representation in Abbey. As of 2009, Jeanne Alexander was the only LBBD councillor living in the Town Centre. Born in Barking, she is the sister of Verona Tucker

Andrews, Peter. Peter Andrews is the CEO of the LTGDC. I met him at the Corporation's offices at Canary Wharf.

Badhan, Neesha When I met her, Neesha worked at the LBBD ACD. She was involved in the Clockhouse Avenue project (2007) when Tracey McNulty—who suggested I get in touch with Neesha—was head of the ACD.

Barnbrook, Richard Born 1961 in Catford, London. Prominent member of the BNP elected to the LBBD Assembly in 2006 representing Goresbrook ward. In 2008 he became the only representative of the BNP elected to the GLA. He was defeated in the 2010 elections after which he resigned from the BNP.

Barratt, George When I met him, George Barratt was chairing a meeting of the Abbey and Gascoigne Wards Neighbourhood Management. He ran for election to the LBBD Assembly in 2010 representing Labour in Mayesbrook ward and was elected. He is married to Miriam Greenwood.

Bell, Matt Matt Bell was appointed Barking and Dagenham's Borough Commander in 2010 by the Metropolitan Police. We met in his windowless office at Maritime House.

Bey, Jurgen Jurgen Bey is a Dutch designer who taught Studio 2 at the RCA. He was involved in the Metamorphosis project with muf and Sarah Butler.

Blake, Yemisi Poet in residence for the Metamorphosis project. Our interview took place in the Royal Festival Hall foyer.

Brady, Martin Martin Brady worked for the LBBD around 2004 but left before I started my project. He was involved in the decision for choosing a landscape consultant for the Town Square and participated in the interviews. I have tried to reach him through other Council officials but never received a response.

Brearley, Mark When I met him, Mark Brearley was Director of DfL. Before joining DfL he was a founding partner at East Architects but did not work on the 2003 framework proposal for Barking.

Brown, Jean When I met Jean she was still working at the Barking central library. Jean was hired by the library in 1967 and started work on the day the old Ripple Road library burned down. She retired in 2011. Jean has lived in the Borough all her life.

Butler, Sarah Born in Manchester. At the time of our interview Sarah lived in Tooting, South London. Her work revolves around creative writing programmes in the city and social writing. She is the founder of Urban Words and collaborates routinely with Spread the Word. She organised the Metamorphosis project with muf.

Candari-Uwase, Jennifer Jennifer came as a Rwandan refugee to the LBBD in 1997. Three years later her kids joined her. She works with the Rwandan community as a volunteer. The first flat she moved into was on the same block as the REC (North Street and London Road). She now lives on the Gascoigne Estate.

Carruthers, Tony Teacher in masonry construction at the Barking and Dagenham College. He collaborated with Katherine Clarke on the Folly Wall; his class fabricated the prototypical fragments of wall and he appointed the student who worked with Shane Moss on the construction of the actual project. We met at the College.

Clarke, Katherine Founding artist partner at muf. She met Liza Fior while teaching at the Architectural Association in 1994. We met twice at the muf studio.

Coombs, Jennie Born and raised in Ilford. Jennie has worked for the LBBD since 1991. When I met her she was Head of Housing and Regeneration at the LBBD.

Crawshaw, Alison Architect at muf. She was project manager for the Barking Town Square which was the subject of her RIBA part-three examination (2010).

Dean, Jamie When I met him, Jamie Dean worked for DfL. He had first joined with the AUU in 2003 and recalls first being in Barking with Richard Rogers and Fred

Manson. He participated to the 2004 interviews for choosing a landscape consultant for the Town Square. We met at the GLA City Hall.

Delaney, Sheila Born in Ireland, Sheila heads the REC. I accidentally got her on the phone while trying to reach an Afro-Caribbean association whose number I got off the LBBD's website. She suggested I come in to speak with her and introduced me to her staff. When I met her, the REC was being evicted from their North Street offices slated for demolition.

Dytor, Ken Ken Dytor founded Urban Catalyst which won the 1999 Town Square competition with Avery Architects. He was an early supporter of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) and public-private partnerships. Mr Dytor was one of the hardest person to track down for an interview (it took a year and a half). I finally met him at the MiHome offices in the City of London. This was the first time he had spoken to anyone about the Barking project since 2006.

Eric UCL graduate student who lived at Ropeworks for six months.

Fairbrass, Charles Charles Fairbrass was Council Leader for the Labour Party in the LBBD Assembly in 1999. While Leader he pushed forward the plans for the Town Square project. When I met him he was Mayor of the LBBD. After representing the Labour Party on the Council for thirty-nine years he stepped down and retired from politics before the May 2010 elections. Mr Fairbrass was born in Poplar and moved to Dagenham in 1944 as a 'returning evacuee from east London'.

Fior, Liza Founding architect partner at muf. She taught at the Architectural Association in the mid-1990s where she met Katherine Clarke and Katherine Shonfield. We met for interviews once at the muf studio and twice at a café on Central Street. During my research Liza was my main point of contact at muf.

Green, Peter Peter Green was originally with Urban Catalyst and switched over to Redrow when the Town Square project changed hands. He left the company shortly after the completion of Barking Central. I interviewed him over the phone two days before he officially left Redrow.

Greenwood, Miriam Miriam Greenwood was educated at the Architectural Association in the early 1970s and started work in the Planning department of the GLC. She answered to my ad in the Council paper and met me coincidentally an hour after her husband, George Barratt. They have lived in Barking since 1996. I met her in the BLC Gallery.

Grint, Jeremy Educated as a town planner, Jeremy Grint came to work on spatial regeneration and development in the LBBD around 1990. When I met him he was Head of the Regeneration department. In his September 2009 speech, Rob Whiteman referred to the Town Square as 'Grint's grant'. He was, according to many informants, the principal mover behind the project but kept a low profile. I met him twice in his office at Barking Town Hall.

Hodge, Margaret Margaret Hodge is Labour MP for Barking. She was first elected in 1994. Commenting on the architecture at the Town Square Mrs Hodge is quoted saying 'now that's what I call architecture.'[822] I was never able to secure an interview with her.

Hudson, Kevin Kevin Hudson replied to my ad in the Council newspaper. He is a freelance illustrator who has lived in the area all his life. As a child he had been 'groomed for a career in politics' and had met George Brooker (former Labour Councillor) who according to Kevin gave him a Masonic handshake. I met Kevin at the BLC café.

Hunte, Janice I had seen Janice Hunte's name when receiving events update for the LBBD. On an invitation from Paul Hogan she participated in the workshop I organised in September 2010. She is responsible for venue bookings and events coordination for the Town Centre (including the Town Square).

Isaacs, Marc Marc Isaacs is a documentary filmmaker and the director of *All White in Barking* which aired on BBC television in 2007. He is originally from Redbridge. Other films he directed include *Lift*, *Calais: The Last Border*, and *Men of the City*. I met him at a coffee shop near West Hampstead tube station.

Karhof, Merel Merel Karhof is a Dutch designer who took part in Jurgen Bey's Studio 2 at the RCA. Her Metamorphosis chair design was chosen by Liza Fior and Alison Crawshaw who asked her to develop a version for the arboretum. I met her at a café in Shoreditch.

King, John John King was hired as project manager by Redrow for phase two of the Town Square project. Although he showed interested and answered my emails for a while I never managed to set up an interview with him.

Lovelace, Denise Librarian at the BLC, she has lived in the Borough all her life. She was closely involved in the Metamorphosis project and had particularly enjoyed Thomas Pausz's project on better communication between generations, an issue she brought up constantly. I interviewed her and Jean Brown together at the BLC and also met her twice after for tea.

[822] Bury.

Mansfield, Dave Dave Mansfield was the LBBD head planning officer for the Town Square project. Although never formally educated as a town planner, he has worked in the LBBD Planning department since 1983. I met him at the department's offices at Maritime House.

Manson, Fred Fred Manson worked in planning and regeneration with the London Borough of Southwark, particularly on the GLA City Hall and the Pekham library. He then joined the AUU with Richard Rogers for the newly formed GLA and was closely involved in Barking by commissioning the 2003 framework by East Architects. He left the AUU shortly after. Our interview took place at a French café next to his self-designed home in King's Cross.

McCormack, Michael Michael McCormack worked at the LBBD ACD with Tracey McNulty and Neesha Badhan. He was my main point of contact at the department during the project.

McNulty, Tracey Tracey McNulty was hired by the LBBD in 2001 to run the A13 Artscape project. Until she left the Council in 2008 she was Group Manager for the ACD. The brief that went out to muf in 2004 was her department's product although she did not take part in the interview process (nobody from the department did). I met her at the National Skills Academy for Creative and Cultural Skills in Southwark.

Midlane, Peter Peter Midlane works as a caretaker at St Margaret's Church. I accidentally got a hold of him because Margaret Nicholls suggested I call the church to get a hold of Joyce Petchey. Peter then gave me a tour of the church and the Curfew Tower.

Monaghan, Paul Co-founding partner of AHMM Architects and leading partner for Barking Central. My introduction to Paul was through Liza Fior. I met him at the AHMM offices on Old Street.

Mor, Sumeyra Sam works with the REC. She was born in Cyprus and makes me guess her background at the start of the interview. She moved to the UK in 1993 as a child straight to Barking. I met her at the REC former offices on North Street.

Moss, Shane Shane Moss was the master bricklayer who worked on the Folly Wall. Shane worked on the Bath House building for its masonry contractor Excel before being presented by his employer as a potential candidate for muf's project. I met him at a construction site in Camden.

Nicholls, Margaret Wife of Ron Nicholls. The Nichollses moved to Barking in 1963. I met them through Linda Rhodes at the BLC library. After Linda Rhodes, they are the first people I interviewed in Barking.

Nicholls, Ron See Margaret Nicholls.

Panxnaj, Myrvette Myrvette came to Barking in 1998 as a refugee from the war in Kosovo. She came with her husband and two children. They were placed in Barking by social services. I met her at the REC where she has worked since 1999.

Petchey, Joyce Joyce has lived in Barking all her life—nearly 90 years. She spent most of it on Upney Lane. She was a teacher at Gascoigne Primary and is something of a legend when it comes to local history. The Nicholls begged me to meet with her although getting an interview with Joyce proved more difficult than meeting high officials in the Regeneration department. She and her husband Ron had me over for tea twice. We also corresponded briefly through mail.

Petchey, Ron Husband of Joyce Petchey. Ron has lived in Barking all his life and worked as a chemist in Beckton.

Pilkey, Brent UCL graduate student who lived in Barking for a month.

Pulham, Lorraine LBBD estate manager who participated in my September 2010 workshop. She is also a member of the Dagenham Crusaders marching band.

Rhodes, Linda Linda Rhodes worked for Local Studies and was in the BLC library every Thursday morning to answer questions from residents. She introduced me to the Nichollses.

Scotcher, Keith Local resident and activist involved in housing issues. I met him for an interview in the BLC Gallery during which he talked at length about how the Council is conspiring to remove all poor tenants to replace them with higher earners, demolishing part of the Gascoigne Estate and shipping it to a developing country 'out east'. He also gave me one of his poems about the maritime heritage of Barking.

Talat, Tehreem Tehreem was born in Pakistan. She came to barking in 2007 after she got married and now works for the REC. I met her at their former offices on North Street.

Tucker, Verona Sister of Councillor Jeanne Alexander. I met her at the REC where she did volunteer work. She has lived in Barking all her life. Verona tells me about her sister and her husband Tony Ramsey 'who wants to be working class but isn't, we are!'

Verona wants desperately to meet somebody rich. The richest person she knows is Tony. I met her at the former REC offices on North Street.

Ullah, Nazeem Nazeem Ullah was BLC Director from 2007 to 2011. We collaborated on my September 2010 public space workshop. Nazeem fervently believed in the civic potential of the new Town Square and the BLC's role in supporting a renewed sense of civic pride and responsibility. I interviewed him in his office at the BLC.

Wagenaar, Fenna Fenna Wagenaar was my first point of contact at DfL and is the one who invited me to the September 2009 ceremony. I met her at the DfL offices in Southwark.

Wallace, Steven Steven owns a house on the Becontree Estate. He moved from Waltham Forest about ten years ago because he found it too dangerous and edgy. He did not want to live in the Barking Town Centre because of its 'edge' and preferred the suburban life of Dagenham. We met when he replied to my advert in the Council newspaper and offered to show me around Dagenham in his car. I went there on a Sunday and we drove to the Rainham marshes further east before going to Dagenham Market.

Watson, Peter Trained as a civil engineer, Peter Watson works for the LBBD. He was project manager for the A13 Artscape and worked closely with Tracey McNulty. He was asked by Jeremy Grint, who described him as a 'rough diamond', to oversee the Town Square project and is widely acknowledged by other participants as having been one of the main reasons the project was delivered. I met him at the BLC café.

Whiteman, Rob Rob Whiteman was Chief Executive at the LBBD until 2010 and oversaw the entire Town Square project. I have tried to interview Mr Whiteman many times, repeatedly sending emails to himself and his PA but never received any reply.

Williams, Loraine I met Loraine after a Neighbourhood Management Team meeting in November 2009. She invited me to the Gascoigne Estate chit-chat group which she ran. I was hoping she would later put me in touch with other community groups at the Gascoigne Estate but had then left the Council.

B. LIST OF INTERVIEWS AND AUDIO

Table 1. List of interviews and audio recordings.

TYPE	CODE	INTERVIEWEE OR EVENT
AUD	20090930	Arboretum opening speeches
AUD	20091005	Joyce Petchey lecture to the BDHS
AUD	20091102	Mark Watson lecture to the BDHS
AUD	20091124	Meeting with Gascoigne Estate chit-chat group
AUD	20091125	European Prize lecture at Architecture Foundation
AUD	20100127	Alison Crawshaw and Peter Watson presentation to Croydon representatives
AUD	20100209	Liza Fior lecture at London MET
AUD	20100303	Liza Fior lecture at Architecture Foundation
AUD	20101118	Liza Fior lecture in Barking
AUD	20100513	Barking Central completion ceremony speeches
AUD	20110819	Lecture for Barking Central NLA award
WRK	20100921	Workshop with Council
WRK	20111206	Workshop with Urban Design Forum
WRK	20111207	Workshop with Youth Forum
INT	20090716A	Linda Rhodes, Local Studies
INT	20090716B	Margaret Nicholls, local resident
INT	20090716B	Ron Nicholls, local resident
INT	20090925A	Ed, PCSO
INT	20090925B	Eve, PCSO
INT	20090928	Shane Moss, mason for Folly Wall
INT	20091001	Sarah Butler, arts coordinator
INT	20091002A	Peter Midlane, St Margaret's church
INT	20091002B	Ned, local resident
INT	20091002C	Rita, local resident
INT	20091005	Jeremy Grint, LBBD Regeneration
INT	20091009	Fred Manson, former AUU
INT	20091019	Tracey McNulty, former LBBD ACD
INT	20091021A	Yemisi Blake, poet and writer
INT	20091021B	Fenna Wagenaar, DfL
INT	20091026	Alison Crawshaw, muf
INT	20091026	Liza Fior, muf
INT	20091105	Joyce Petchey, local resident
INT	20091105	Ron Petchey, local resident
INT	20091124A	Zoinul Abidin, LBBD libraries

TYPE	CODE	INTERVIEWEE OR EVENT
INT	20091124B	Joyce Petchey
INT	20091124B	Ron Petchey
INT	20091126A	Miriam Greenwood, local resident
INT	20091126B	George Barratt, local resident
INT	20091202	Nils, local resident
INT	20100206	Steven Wallace, local resident
INT	20100210	Marc Isaacs, filmmaker
INT	20100217A	Ian, local resident
INT	20100217B	Ivan, LBBD Regeneration
INT	20100218	Denise Lovelace, LBBD libraries
INT	20100218	Jean Brown, LBBD libraries
INT	20100219	Liza Fior
INT	20100223	Jeanne Alexander, local resident, Councillor
INT	20100225A	Nazeem Ullah, BLC
INT	20100225B	Charles Fairbrass, local resident, Mayor
INT	20100225C	Michael McCormack, LBBD Arts
INT	20100304	Amy, local resident
INT	20100304	Ingrid, local resident
INT	20100305A	Eric, local resident, UCL
INT	20100305B	Jennie Coombs, LBBD Regeneration
INT	20100311	Mohammed Fani, local resident, Councillor
INT	20100331	Katherine Clarke, muf
INT	20100408	Jamie Dean, DfL
INT	20100414	Arti, local resident
INT	20100415A	Tony Carruthers, Barking and Dagenham College
INT	20100415B	Sid, porter Ropeworks
INT	20100415C	Charles, Tulip Café
INT	20100415D	Elizabeth, Tulip Café
INT	20100416A	Keith Scotcher, local resident
INT	20100416B	Tehreem Talat, local resident, REC
INT	20100419A	Peter Watson, LBBD
INT	20100419B	Nadine, local resident
INT	20100419B	Sebastian, local resident
INT	20100420A	Sumeyra Mor, local resident, REC
INT	20100420B	Verona Tucker, local resident, REC
INT	20100420C	Naomi, local resident, REC
INT	20100421	Mary, local resident
INT	20100507	Paul Monaghan, AHMM
INT	20100511	Dave Mansfield, LBBD Planning
INT	20100517A	Jennifer Candari-Uwase, local resident, REC

TYPE	CODE	INTERVIEWEE OR EVENT
INT	20100517B	Sheila Delaney, local resident, REC
INT	20100518	Myrvette Panxnaj, local resident, REC
INT	20100526	Katherine Clarke
INT	20100527	Merel Karhof, RCA
INT	20100625	Jurgen Bey, RCA
INT	20100720	Peter Green, Redrow
INT	20100726	Peter Andrews, LTGC
INT	20100727	Mark Brearley, DfL
INT	20100729	Brent Pilkey, local resident, UCL
INT	20100809	Matt Bell, MET Police
INT	20100929	Alison Crawshaw
INT	20101104	Jeremy Grint
INT	20101207	Liza Fior
INT	20110616	Ken Dytor, former Urban Catalyst
INT	20111004	Danielle, local resident
INT	20111221	Sophie, former muf employee
LET	20100224	Maria Cowtier, local resident
PHO	20091111	Mary Edwards, local resident
PHO	20101111	Jimmy Preston, local resident

C. TIMELINE

Table 2. Town Square project timeline adapted and augmented from Alison Crawshaw's part three case study submitted to the RIBA in 2010.

YEAR	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	RELATED EVENTS
2000	Jan: **Announcement of competition winners Urban Catalyst and Avery Architects.**	Jan: Visions of the Future exhibition. Sep: *Golden Carpet* installation at Town Square.
2001		Tracey McNulty hired as group manager. Publication of *A muf Manual*.
2002	**AHMM replace Avery as architects.** Aug: UC and AHMM planning application for mixed use development to LBBD. Dec: Planning approval granted.	
2003	Mar: Outline planning application granted for phase one and two. Dec: AHMM submit detailed planning application to LBBD.	100 Public Spaces Programme (second phase).
2004	Jan: AHMM submit reserved matters application to LBBD. Sep: AHMM submit revised reserved matters application to LBBD. Nov: Interviews for public realm consultants. Dec: **muf appointed as public realm consultants.**	*The Barking Code: Final Report* by Burns and Nice.
2005	**LTGDC takes over planning for project**. Jan: Construction of phase one begins. April: Stage C design proposal (public realm) later submitted as part of Tenants Proposals of phase two. May: Initial design proposal by muf. July: UC orders Wates to stop on site pending costing outcome of residential for phase one. Aug: Wates withdraws from site pending decision. Nov: **Redrow takes over as developer.** Dec: Ardmore appointed as contractor.	Feb: **First hoarding project by muf.** May: muf appointed for Clockhouse Avenue. Dec: muf complete report for greenery in Barking Town Centre.
2006	Jan: muf/AHMM contract renegotiated with Redrow. March: Revised reserved matters application (following value-engineering) submitted to LBBD. May: Planning permission granted; Ardmore restarts construction; phasing of public realm negotiated (two phases). June: Submission of phase two revised tenants proposals to LBBD; public realm concept design submitted (see April 2005) with tenants proposals; public realm design development to stage D and costing phase one. Aug: Public realm detail design of phase one submitted to discharge planning condition for phase one construction. Oct: Public realm production of construction documents for phase one. Nov: Public realm concept design phase two submitted as part C report to employer (AHMM). Dec: Submission of reserved matters	*Barking Town Centre: Urban Design Principles* by Allies and Morrison. March: Architecture salvage for Folly procured. April: Workshops with apprentice bricklayers at Barking and Dagenham College. July: Detail drawings for Folly Wall submitted to LBBD.

YEAR	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION	RELATED EVENTS
	planning application including public realm phase two concept design.	
2007	Jan: Public realm construction phase one starts (granite). March: **Practical completion of phase one**; public realm construction (terrazzo). May: Residential handover; full planning permission granted for phase two. June: BLC opens; AHMM role switches from employer to contractor; public realm construction (lights). July: Switch from Redrow to ACL as client; muf appointed as AHMM's sub-consultant. Aug: Public realm phase two split into two contracts; Contractors submission for phase two contract 1; **public realm phase one construction complete.** Sep: **Ceremony for opening of phase one**; public realm submission of contractors proposals phase two contract 1; Phase two contract 1 construction starts. Oct: Public realm visit to nursery and presentation on tree species. Nov-Dec: Public realm cost dispute and negotiation; fee schedule revised; client increases muf's fees.	Jan: Secret Millionaire Dagenham airs on Channel 4. March: Construction of Folly Wall starts. June: Preparation for exhibition and second hoarding project. Sep: **Folly Wall completed; exhibition A Model Town Centre opens; second hoarding project installed.**
2008	Jan: Public realm Frost landscape contractors appointed. March: Contractors submission for phase two contract 2; contract 2 construction starts; public realm lighting proposal. April: **Barking Town Square wins European Prize**. July: Public realm planning submission to discharge planning condition. Sep: Public realm construction of phase two contract 1 starts; stage built. Oct: **Practical completion of phase two contract 1**; public realm nursery visit to tag trees. Dec: Public realm completion date set back by Redrow in order to slow payments to contractors.	Rooms with a view (Verity Keefe) March: *All White in Barking* (Marc Isaacs) airs on BBC. **Oct: Metamorphosis project starts.** Nov: Workshops with ARC; workshops with year 5 students from Gascoigne; writer Yemisi Blake in residence at BLC; writer's room project. Dec: Metamorphosis project ends (Dec 8).
2009	Jan: Public realm trees planted. April: **Public realm phase two contract 1 completed.** Sep: **Ceremony for opening of arboretum (phase two contract 1).** Oct: Practical completion of phase two contract 2. Nov: Public realm construction of phase two contract 2 starts.	July: TBK first visit to Barking. Sep: **Exhibition of Metamorphosis project in BLC Gallery.**
2010	May: **Public realm construction of phase two contract 2 completed; ceremony for completion of Barking Central.**	muf appointed to curate British pavilion at Venice Biennale. *The Barking Code for the Public Realm and how it should be applied* by muf. March: The Politics Show on Barking (BBC). May: **General elections**. Nov: *The Battle for Barking* airs on Channel 4.

D. CEREMONY SPEAKERS

Table 3. Official speeches given at each ceremony by organisation and speaker.

CEREMONY	2007	2009	2010
Speeches by organisation (and speaker) in the order of appearance	LBBD Chief Executive (Rob Whiteman)	Barking MP (Margaret Hodge)	LBBD Chief Executive (Rob Whiteman/absent, replaced by Tracie Evans)
	LBBD Council Leader (Charles Fairbrass)	Design for London (Mark Brearley)	LBBD Council Leader (Charles Fairbrass)
	Design for London (Fred Manson)	LBBD Chief Executive (Rob Whiteman)	AHMM (Paul Monaghan)
	LTGDC (Lorraine Baldry)		LDA (Peter Bishop)
			LTGDC (Peter Andrews)

E. THE CLEANSING OF THE MARKET

The event in question is a 'read aloud' session by library staff for the 2010 World Book Day (WBD). I had received notification of the event via the Borough's mailing list and thought it was to take place on the new Town Square. When I arrived in Barking I made my way to the library where librarian Jean Brown told me the event was to take place at the market, not the Town Square. She agreed with the organisers that this is where they stood a chance of reaching more people. The following excerpt from my fieldnotes describes what happened next (Plate 20):

> I sit on the steps of the stage. Five people from the library come by including Zoinul, they wave and I tell them I'll join them shortly. I walk to the Market via Ripple Road to make sure I'll find them. Nobody could tell me where they would be in the market.
>
> My expectations of WBD were tremendous, I realise, compared to what is actually happening.
>
> I find them in front of Julie's Fast Food cart, setting up. I almost miss them. They are by a green metal bin and a mobile service provider. Zoinul tells me that it's only happening in the market. He looks disappointed. He says the Dagenham thing wasn't good because on the Heathway people are just walking by, they're no strolling like in the market. He tells me he's hopeful. They have an amplifier and a microphone. Zoinul first introduces the group from the library. Very short. One staff member starts reading poetry while the five others approach people with leaflets asking if they want to join the library. It looks painful. The scene is pathetic with them so small in the market. Zoinul tells me that they wanted to set up in front of the Magistrates Court but they were told to move, that they made too much noise. Meanwhile Julie's is playing popular music from crappy speakers.
>
> A young white girl who had been speaking with Julie's owners passes in front of me and goes to talk to the owner (also white, in his 40s) of the stall in front of the library crew. He says, joking, 'you should sign up, you need help'. They both laugh. I think this is the understanding of what a Learning Centre is (Fred Manson had mentioned how he found the word condescending).
>
> She walks back to Julie's and chats with the two owners, possibly a couple. They are both white and in their 50s. A few minutes later the man at Julie's turns the volume of their music really loud, drowning out the lady reading out a poem. Zoinul and I look back and the three of them are laughing their heads off. Are they serious? It's really uncomfortable. It sounds like a stand-off but I don't know whether the three are playing or pissed off. They keep laughing.
>
> A man approaches Zoinul and introduces himself as the manager of the market. He asks if they have proper authorization, that they can't just come and set up like that whenever they want. It's an amazing scene. Zoinul doesn't know what to say (I'm right next to him), he fumbles

with words and lets him know that he tried reaching whoever was responsible but couldn't. The man lectures him on due process and says he will go talk to his superior and ask. He says you cannot give out leaflets because people will just throw them out on the street and that would be the BLC's responsibility.

'A dog chasing its own tail' as a friend will later comment.

When the man leaves, Zoinul and I exchange a few words on absurd local politics. The event was advertised by the Council and the Council then proceeds to shut it down. The man comes back later and tells Zoinul they can go on but without the amplifier. So the staff continues handing out leaflets while the read aloud part is scrapped. Even Zoinul could not find the person responsible (Ralph Cook). What would a local resident do? The people at Julie's turn down their music.

F. THE ELDERLY

The title scene of Marc Isaacs' *All White in Barking* shows a group of elderly white people square-dancing in a gymnasium. The camera switches between a few faces:

> Woman one: There are too many people now coming into the country and there's not enough space for them.
>
> Woman two: And they're not our people.
>
> Man: There are so many nationalities here now that you don't know who's who. You don't know where anybody is from. You're never in a spot to find weird food though! Any nationality you can eat. You have no alternative but to accept what's there. I don't know what we can do about it! [Scene ends.] [823]

The prevailing sense at the start of my research was that indeed most older (white) people, those who called themselves 'born and bred', had strong opinions with regards to demographic changes and regeneration, often conflating the two. More often than not the elderly were attributed a single point of view, as a group, opposing change in any sort of way. Dave Mansfield, for example, speaks of the group's nostalgia for prosperous Barking of forty years ago. Margaret Hodge mentions that the most dramatic event people spoke of when she arrived in Barking was the loss of the Marks and Spencer—an event usually bemoaned by local residents over sixty years old. Historian Linda Rhodes and librarians Jean Brown and Denise Lovelace all complained about the way the elderly were treated by the Council: forgotten and overlooked in contrasts to the younger generations. All three pointed toward the elderly abandoning the library, intimidated by the new space and its colours. Even the elderly among themselves sometimes treated each other as a homogeneous group. Ron and Margaret Nicholls spoke of themselves and their contemporaries as 'old people from Old Barking'.

[823] Marc Isaacs, *All White In Barking* (Bungalow Town Productions Ltd, 2007).

G. RENAISSANCE SQUARE

The 2003 'Sustainable Communities' document recognises that 'community is more than just housing', that communities are made sustainable through, first, a 'flourishing economy', and that for the whole to work well in the future one also has to achieve a 'sense of place'.[824] This 'sense of place' is better defined in the 2000 document 'Our Towns and Cities' which gives a generic vision of the urban realm:

> Public spaces must be attractive, clean, safe and well cared-for, combining vitality and interest with practicality, sensitivity to the environment and continuity with the past. They must be well designed and planned, and make the best use of previously-developed land and existing buildings.[825]

It continues, stating in a matter-of-fact way that 'where we live affects how we live.'[826] By stating this, the government of the time expresses quite clearly its view that social aspects of the public realm are indivisible from its physical properties. Going further back, the 1999 'Toward an Urban Renaissance' report includes strategic guidance toward the design and maintenance of the public realm:

> Well-designed urban districts and neighbourhoods succeed because they recognise the primary importance of the public realm—the network of spaces between buildings that determine the layout, form and connectivity of the city. The shape of public spaces and the way they link together are essential to the cohesion of urban neighbourhoods and communities.[827]

The report's recommendations are extensive as to the way in which public space must be designed. The most critical point is to move away from 'isolated pockets of open space' and embrace a network strategy linking public spaces together. Effective relations between spaces become as important as good design for the spaces themselves. The upkeep of these relations and spaces is also primordial—a state of disrepair leads eventually to a breakdown in movement, pride and identity. Maintenance, it continues, has to be assumed by the public sector which 'must act as custodian of the public realm.'[828]

'Toward an Urban Renaissance' references the case of successful design-led regeneration and public realm improvements like Copenhagen and Barcelona (whose Mayor co-signed the report) so that the 'renaissance' public realm seems more identifiable

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[824] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Sustainable Communities', p. 5.
[825] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Our Towns and Cities', chap. 4.
[826] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Our Towns and Cities', pt. 4.1.
[827] Urban Task Force, p. 22.
[828] Urban Task Force, p. 28. This last point is challenged by Ken Dytor as he gives me his personal take on Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). The public realm, he categorically states, is not capable of caring for the public realm. Maintenance must be done through public and private partnerships.

with ideals of European continental public spaces than with English garden squares or high streets thus giving weight to those in Barking who identify the 'continental' aspects of the Town Square or the Barcelona chronotope it expresses.

H. THE BENIGN CORPORATION

Ken Dytor and Urban Catalyst

Before setting up Urban Catalyst (UC), Ken Dytor had been involved in the revival of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) (the 'urine smelling' Baker Street station was an epiphany)[829], founding the Circle Initiative, getting the private sector to invest in the public realm and setting up public-private partnerships (while with British Land). The main driver for his work, he explained in our interview, was to set up collaborations with the public sector rather than being confrontational, working on common interests and seeing a correlation between the public sector interest in local communities and the private sector interest in business viability.

> There is no reason why you can't deliver both at the same time. They don't need to be in conflict. In fact if you're in conflict you're more likely not to deliver the bottom lines… I did believe that where we were heading was where the viability would be. I actually felt that building single-use over-specified non-sustainable projects was not going to be the future. We would be creating dinosaurs if we did that.[830]

The Urban Renaissance report was 'academic' according to him but did help changing the overall relationship between local authorities and developers like UC who focused on 'deliverability on the ground'.

The LTGDC

Created in 2004 following recommendations from the Sustainable Communities Plan, the LTGDC operates in two major areas of East London labelled 'dysfunctional'.[831] It has land purchasing powers (including compulsory purchasing powers), planning authority for their area and public money to invest in locally developed projects.[832] Further centralising the ideology behind development policies between 1997 and 2010, the LTGDC works primarily as an enabler between the public and private sectors typical of the 'third-way' of public-private partnerships, seeing that private money is available to fund public sector schemes and injecting public money where judged necessary.

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[829] Ken Dytor, INT20110616.
[830] Ken Dytor, INT20110616.
[831] A dysfunctional area is characterised by 'disparate land ownership, major environmental challenges, large scale ground contamination, local infrastructure and access issues, significant deprivation and serious skills deficits.' London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, *Regenerating East London: a Report on Progress and Future Activities*.
[832] The LTGDC was created by an act of the UK Government in 2004 and acquired planning authority over its area comprised of parts of five different London boroughs in 2005. It is responsible for two major areas: Lea Valley (including the 2012 Olympics Park) and London Riverside. Unlike the 1980s UDCs, the LTGDC was not granted ownership of the land they oversaw. London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, *Regenerating East London: a Report on Progress and Future Activities*.

The area of 'Barking Town' (their name for the Town Centre) was not part of the Corporation's remit at first. According to Mark Brearley, it is only after insistence from the AUU that the Barking Town Centre (and Town Square) was included in the area of the LTGDC.

Throughout my interview with Peter Andrews there was a sense that the expression 'sustainable community' made him feel uncomfortable.

> TBK: You seem to be very hesitant about the term sustainable communities that came out of the previous government versus what you call good development.
>
> PA: Uh... not really. I think sustainable communities is… It's a description of what is a…you know…a cohesive, how to say it, comprehensive development that brings together all the components that you would need to have a proper place-making agenda. So it is about place-making. It is about…how can I describe it…creating a community, you know? A community that will last…and be certain to prosper.[833]

With respect to public space this place-making agenda, albeit hesitantly expressed above, appears focused on the delivery of a material product.

> [We] contributed to the *pink granite*... to provide quality public realm which also enabled them to deliver the kind of arboretum in the centre and we also contributed to the wall. […] We were keen that we delivered a high quality product there.[834]

There is still the belief, however faint, that a quality product would deliver the social and economic promises of regeneration. 'Start putting some decent public realm in. Start getting the connections right, the signage right.' And this, he argues, leads to the tipping point when regeneration has reached a 'natural momentum'. But in a comment that belies the attitude of the Corporation *vis-à-vis* some of the 'dysfunctional' areas it is responsible for, he wonders whether the arboretum has been well thought out. He argues it should have been carefully planned for actual everyday use. 'It looks great if you stand away from it and look into it.'[835] But, as he says, 'what will happen with that place is people will chuck litter in it. Kids will go and play in it. You know, it doesn't really work.'[836] The designers, he continues, should have thought about how the public realm will work under fairly intensive use and 'the fact that nobody is going to pay a great deal of respect.'[837] The paradox seems to be that good design creates good communities, but that only good communities deserve good design. Even if the LTGDC did fund part of the granite for the Square, Andrews

[833] Peter Andrews, INT20100726.
[834] Peter Andrews, INT20100726.
[835] INT20100726.
[836] INT20100726.
[837] INT20100726.

questions the expense. The problem, he finds, is that the place lacks activity. Something, he says, should have been done to bring activity in the centre of the place. Again begging the question of whether good urban design can lead to social change, he comments:

> If there were reasons for people to congregate, you could justify that expanse of granite. But I don't think you can justify it. I think it needs to have some additional activity coming into the centre of it to just give it some life.[838]

Elsewhere in the interview, he identifies what for him is the fundamental issue in Barking while giving a sense of how the broader problem of activity should be approached. The biggest problem, he sees, is that the economy of the Barking Town Centre is dying. He deplores the absence of any restaurant, 'it can't even stretch to a Pizza Express'[839], the absence of any branded coffee shop, and the market that attracts poor people while wealthy residents go out of town to regional shopping malls Galleon, Lakeside and Bluewater. For him, these elements are 'all symptomatic of a town being dysfunctional.'[840] And eventually the disconnection between public spaces, criticised in 'Towards an Urban Renaissance', is expressed as the disconnection between the civic realm and the marketplace in Barking which, according to him, should not be separated.

The 2005 crisis

In the first two years of my research, the impression that was given to me by Council representatives, the LTGDC, DfL and design professionals involved in the project was that the crisis was the result of UC going bankrupt combined with a financially non-viable scheme.[841] But Ken Dytor, UC's founder, gave me a different version when I finally met him in June 2011. He explained that UC was forced by the Council to start construction without a proper bid from the main contractor Wates (otherwise the Council would lose its grant from the central government for the BLC, confirmed by Jeremy Grint, AUD20110819) who then came up with a figure that was, according to Dytor, £5M over their estimate. They were thus forced to stop construction halfway through phase one. UC negotiated with Redrow that they take over the project with their own contractor, Ardmore. When the dust settled, Redrow had taken over completely from UC, Ardmore was main contractor (their bid was exactly what UC's estimate had been), and the LTGDC was now planning authority for the project.[842] Although accounts of the crisis vary, two major

[838] Peter Andrews, INT20100726.
[839] INT20100726.
[840] INT20100726. See also Appendix V.
[841] Jeremy Grint, INT20101104; Peter Andrews, INT20100726; Jamie Dean, INT 20100408; Paul Monaghan, INT20100507; Alison Crawshaw, INT20100929.
[842] Ken Dytor, INT20110616.

contention points can be brought out. First, a breakdown in relationships between the public and private sectors (on timing, budget and contracts); and second, disagreements on the financial aspects of the project within the private sector (viability and overpricing).

I. TOWN SQUARE AND LONDON

The first Town Hall, just outside the curfew tower, was located facing the Broadway, a street swelling that accommodated markets (see Appendix U). One of the liveliest places since the early 1900s, Blake's Corner is the intersection of Ripple Road and East Street. The Victorian Barking Park is added before the end of the nineteenth century and the Abbey Green is the result of slum clearances at the beginning of the twentieth century. The Town Square only appears after the Town Hall is built and after the fire station is demolished, around the end of the 1970s. Although at that time it is more passageway than public place. As a resident who remembers the area says: 'we didn't have a town square.'[843] And so the issue of typology is once again brought up as with the *plaza dura* and Urban Renaissance chronotopes. Jamie Dean:

> There aren't that many town squares that far east… Most Anglo-Saxon places…it's a high street, isn't it? What it builds around, and maybe there is a loop off the high street. But then there are some small market squares.[844]

His colleague Mark Brearley recognises the same:

> A square is quite an odd thing to have in London. It's not a very londony thing at all, a *square*. I mean there is plenty of residential squares, that's a different thing. But to have a *town square* is very unusual.[845]

Compared to the typical London garden (residential) square, the Barking Town Square is indeed a different thing, continuous with the movement across the Town Centre, with no fences and no restricted access according to ownership or the time of day.[846] While the Town Square might be unusual historically with respect to the morphology of public space in Barking and London it is not so unusual for the last ten years in London.

[843] Margaret Nicholls, INT20090716.
[844] INT20100408.
[845] INT20100727.
[846] Also noted in Murray Fraser. Typology is only brought up by design professionals and British nationals having an interest in public space, along with those UK residents who have first hand experience of squares in continental Europe, but never by local residents. Long time local residents might complain about the emptiness and the lack of trees (before the arboretum opened), the possibility for bad weather, and recent immigrants and teenagers rarely mention anything other than the buildings; the open space, for them, seems to be a matter of fact.

J. TOWN SQUARE AND TOWN CENTRE

The 2006 allies and morrison plan

Figure 74. Diagram from the 2006 report showing the connective route through the Town Centre and four distinct areas.

The 2006 Allies and Morrison's plan also starts off by representing the Town Centre as a series of discrete areas or zones: Station Quarter, Retail Centre, Abbey Green and Town Quay (Figure 74). Drawing a straight line from *The Catch* (Plate 82) to the Town Quay, the same as was identified by Avery in their 2000 competition entry, the plan skewers the four zones with a series of related public spaces.

> This key route should be absolutely clear and celebrated as a main thoroughfare. At the intersection between north-south and the east-west streets there is the opportunity to identify a series of urban spaces which will make key focal points in the town centre. Each one of these redefined spaces deserves high quality design to create five memorable places for the town centre of new Barking.[847]

While these are rather broad strokes they give a simplified and arguably wrong picture of the Town Centre. Each area inevitably overlaps and there are significant north-south boundaries that run opposite to these east-west parallel zones. For example, understanding part of the Gascoigne Estate as a part of the Abbey Green zone negates the very real boundary of St Paul's Road. Identifying *The Catch* as a significant public space overlooks the fact that while it might be a landmark, it is not a place for pedestrians to pass through or hang out but a major traffic roundabout. The fragmented nature of the Town Centre is better represented in a subsequent diagram which subdivides the Town Centre into twelve 'quarters' based on landmarks, existing projects and future developments (Figure 75).

[847] Allies and Morrison, 'Barking Town Centre: Urban Design Principles', 2006.

Figure 75. Diagram from the 2006 report showing the division of the Town Centre into twelve distinct and overlapping 'quarters'.

Their final 'assembled plan' and proposal for the Town Centre shows a distribution of discrete public spaces as either central to a particular quarter or as connecting spaces between two or more quarters (Figure 76).

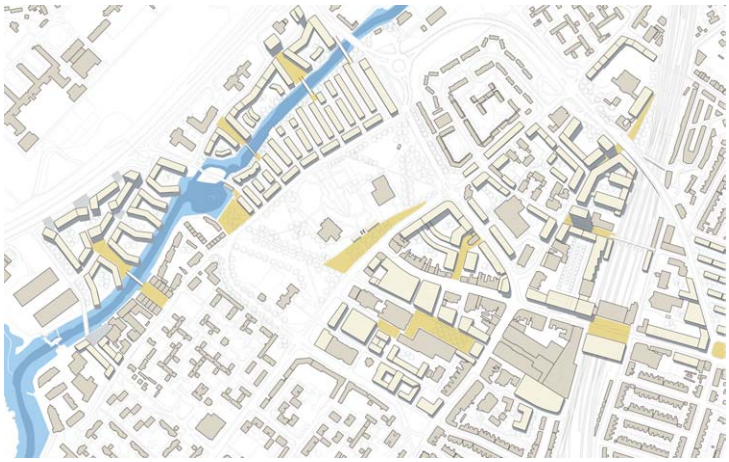

Figure 76. 2006 report final assembled plan of proposals.

Jennie Coombs on connections

From INT20100305B:

> Jennie Coombs: The way I see it is that [the Market Square] is very much the commercial side of things and the Town Square is very much more the civic and linking the two spaces is going to be very important. I think again that's around the quality of the public realm and the linkages between the two projects. The spaces between the Magistrates Court that you walk down are going to become very important. And do you make that look like it's all one space that sort of spills out across East Street? The middle bit of East Street in front of the Court is going to be very important to make that happen.
>
> TBK: Do you have plans to redo landscaping in that area?
>
> JC: Well I think that to make it happen we're obviously going to re-landscape the Market Square when the two projects phase I and phase II

finish and we already have some funding and we're looking at how to do the space around the Court. I think that if we didn't do the middle of East Street we'd miss the trick, wouldn't we? We've got to tie them together.

TBK: Do you think it's only a question of landscaping and having quality public realm at that point or do you think the two centres of activity are enough to create links?

JC: I think the two centres of activity should create links but to do the job properly you have to pay proper importance to the quality of that space that is in between them. People could wander out onto East Street and if the market is on how would you know, if you're wandering around Barking for the first time and you've been to this nice new Market Square, you've been to the supermarket, you've wandered out onto East Street, the market is on, would you know that Town Square is there? How would you think 'oh, there's more stuff through there, I'm going to have a look at that'?

The Burns and Nice pilot project

The 2004 pilot project by Burns and Nice in front of the Broadway Theatre was meant to create a sense of place for what they saw as an important connection between the Abbey Green area and the retail centre including the civic core. The project makes sense first of all in plan with a skewed ellipse of grey granite (the principal paving material of their Code) centred on the intersection of Clockhouse Avenue and the Broadway. The ellipse, where it swoops into the area of Abbey Green and across on the parvis of the theatre has granite blocks for benches lining its perimeter (Figure 77 and Figure 78).

Figure 77. Plan of the Burns and Nice 'ellipse' pilot scheme for Broadway from their 2004 Code.

Figure 78. Rendering of 'ellipse' scheme looking toward the Broadway Theatre from the 2004 Code.

The granite benches on the theatre side were eventually hacked down to swooping shapes impossible to sit on because customers from the neighbouring pub, the Captain Cook, would loiter with drinks. The pub has since been shut down, demolished and the ground sodded over. The teenagers from the Barking and Dagenham College who study performing arts at the theatre tend to hang out in the sunken entrance to the back stage on Clockhouse Avenue rather than in the open area of the new Broadway ellipse. The pilot project, seven years after its completion, is in a state of disrepair. Granite pavers in the middle of the street are lifting off, and where this has become dangerous for traffic the stones have been removed and the ground covered with tar (Plate 60). I had passed many times by the place before realising that it had been a pilot project for the first Barking Code. From the ground, it is hardly apparent that something extraordinary is supposed to happen here. The connections between the ellipse and the surrounding mess of 'uncoded' public realm are barely apparent to the casual passer-by. I have also never seen much use of the place. Even after a performance at the Broadway Theatre the place fills up a little and very temporarily. Since the benches have been hacked down, no one sits there to rest. On the other side, the benches are far from the bus stop, which may have been one of the more logical places for them to be.

St George's Day

The festivities for St George's day 2010 are an example of an event which brings out the connections in the Town Centre. On this day special events took place in the Town Square, Abbey Green, and the BLC. It is Friday, 23 April 2010, but St George's day is not a national holiday and so the rest of the Town Centre went about to its weekly business and the market was on. At the time I was living in the Ropeworks building and had invited a few friends over to Barking for the day. They all lived in Central London and none had ever visited the town. Out of the five who came, only one was originally from England. We moved from Town Square to Abbey Green and then to East Street—just missing Richard

Barnbrook, dressed as St George and riding a horse, have an altercation with Billy Bragg—hung around the station for a while and later took in the view of Canary Wharf and the City from the rooftop of the Ropeworks. The following is my eye witness account of the day as recorded in my field notes:

> It's St George's day! Not a statutory holiday. Weather is perfect, not a cloud in the sky.
>
> 11:00 Hear the tea dance music very loud from courtyard of Ropeworks. Very few people on Square at the start. The graffiti removal unit is on site scrubbing what seems like a red wax stain on the pink granite near the stage. A man from Ardmore is also there fixing some of the nosing on the stage steps—but not all. Only four dancers will do the tea dance and wheelchair dance. Interestingly the wheelchair dancers are all able-bodied elderly people. Not one disabled person will come. Square gradually fills up. Café is full. Lots of Council workers out there. Librarians setting up for a quiz that never seems to take place. They line up elderly women on balcony of BLC conference room where Mark Watson gave his talk on heraldry. Zoinul is there with a rose in his jacket. James (Tulip Café) tells me business is a bit slow despite the number of people on the Square.
>
> 12:30 T meets me as the dance is finishing. He thinks the place looks better, less imposing than on the published photos. The café is putting out more tables, business is picking up.
>
> 13:00 Joyce (not Petchey), a white British woman in her 80, walks by and I say hi. She tells me she's heard Billy Bragg is around. 'He comes and tells us how great Barking is...and then goes back to Dorset!' Later she will walk by again and say 'he lives in Dorset, you know? He can go out at night there, but I wouldn't here!' Billy Bragg does come on stage and plays three songs. Jeremy Grint is out. Dominic Carman (Liberal Democrat candidate for Barking) walks by, stops to listen. A group of teenagers play classical music, then school groups from the Gascoigne and St Mary's schools sing songs. Nothing happens in the arboretum. The action stops before the trees that are in shadows. Lots of cameras and news/film crews. Rob Whiteman is out. I introduce myself, he says he'll call me this very afternoon for a chat but never does.
>
> 14:15 We decide to go to Abbey Green. By that time the tea dance is back on and the Square is slowly emptying. This is by far the best I've seen the Square being used. The most people. Overall the attendance is again very mixed. I don't notice anything different in demographics from other days. But lots of cleaners: both parks and regular cleaning crew. Lots of police, hub officers, PCSOs, and Event Security. Lots of ethnic minorities wearing and waving St George paraphernalia. They are finishing to lay sod where the Captain Cook (correct spelling) pub used to stand. The pub was allegedly shut down after a stabbing took place there. Demolition was fast and it seems like it was even faster to erase any trace of its existence. Abbey Green filled with kids at different 'stations' and workshops spread on the periphery. Dragon parade starts with all the kids. My friend E comments how Barking Central looks artificial from Abbey Green.

> 15:00 Police sirens. I'll learn later that Richard Barnbrook rode a horse, again, this time down East Street and even got into another argument with Billy Bragg.[848]
>
> 15:15 Falconry which boils down to a fenced off area with a shackled vulture limping about and a tiny bird flying from one hand to the other. It's the vocabulary that shocks (kids are of all ages, from 5 to 12-13): carcasses, dead bodies, anthrax ('vultures can even eat anthrax'), blood and guts, etc.
>
> 15:30 The jousting is borderline metaphorical with St George, the hero of the day, wearing white, fighting against the evil Black Knight. Both kneel in front of a girl and the woman commentator asks 'will she choose white or the dark side?' Near the end, when St George finally triumphs over the Black Knight, she asks the audience 'shall they kill him?' and the kids scream out 'kill him!' St George and another knight finish the black knight off with their wooden swords. During the jousting a photographer (for the *Sunday People*, E thinks) comes directly to a mother and asks whether he can take a photo of her daughter. The mother agrees and they move underneath a tree where they proceed to the photo shoot. The kid is mulatto and we can't help thinking that it looks like the perfect political set up. A policeman walks by and talks to the photographer. E and I think he's asking the photographer what he's up to, but no, the photographer has convinced the policeman to join the photo (Plate 42).[849]
>
> 16:30 At Julie's Fast Food because R wants a burger. 'How could you come to Barking and not eat at Julie's?' Two different girls with video cameras come one after the other to film Julie's. We speak to the second one (from Coakroach productions) who is filming a documentary on the appropriation of folk traditions for political purposes. She says her answer to the question 'why are you filming' depends on who she's speaking to. She wonders if we saw 'it'. She doesn't mean the jousting but Barnbrook on a horse. I learn it from her and curse having missed it.
>
> 17:00 The back terrace of the Spotted Dog is packed. W and I are forced to sit inside. I recognise a few Council workers.
>
> 18:00 On the Ropeworks top terrace W and I spot two guys drinking and pissing in the secret garden. Two guys are enjoying the sunset on the lower terrace, smoking. Square is back to normal.

The walk through the Town Centre that day cuts a section through its various spaces and activities. Again the division between a civic core including Abbey Green and East Street and the station parade is remarkable. No activity pulls people from one place to the next. We moved to Abbey Green only because we had read the schedule and knew something was happening there. Although activities happened at various places through the Town Centre their connection was still rather tedious—unlike a parade that would have

[848] This event was quickly reported in the press. This was the second altercation between the two men during pre-election weeks. I have not been able to find any footage or photograph of the event.
[849] The article appeared, without the photo, in Rachael Bletchly, 'Our Flag of Unity', *People*, 25 April 2010 <www.people.co.uk> [accessed 27 April 2010].

connected all these spaces.[850] On the Town Square it seemed as though most people who were present were either involved in the organisation of the events or worked close by. Although there were quite a few people who seemed to have decided to linger after walking by they appeared to be a minority. *TheNews* (LBBD's weekly newspaper) reported that about three hundred people had participated in the events at the Town Square, a figure that to my mind does not reflect reality, unless one takes into account the people on Abbey Green. But I suspect the 'crowd' at the Town Square did not compare to the regular crowd through Barking Market. Richard Barnbrook did not choose the Town Square or Abbey Green to do his stunt, but East Street.

[850] The LBBD Arts and Cultural Development department organised a dance parade the year before that linked Blake's Corner and the Town Square.

K. TOWN SQUARE AND TOWN SQUARE

Ellis Woodman's critique

Writing for *Building Design*, Ellis Woodman's interprets muf's project for the Town Square as a 'series of adjacent territories' that he labels as *polytopic*.

> While legible as a single, collective entity, it is also a space that accommodates an extraordinary variety of local incident. If we look to public space to be a territory in which different activities, communities and indeed, fantasies can take up occupation side by side, this is a project that meets that ambition beautifully.[851]

The reading of the project as *polytopic* is interesting. But throughout the article it is easy to read the designers' voices with expressions I have heard directly from them or read elsewhere, repeated and re-appropriated: 'Alice in Wonderland quality', 'fairytale magic', 'superscaled version of the garden path of an Edwardian semi', the Folly as a 'sly critique of the surrounding scheme' with 'eyebrows raised' at the AHMM buildings, or a 'stage set', the scheme as a 'comment on the excesses of Barking Central', and even the expression 'adjacent territory'.

The grandeur of the arcade

The 'grandeur' of the arcade (in the largest sense of height, from the French, and splendour) comes not from a design decision by AHMM, but from the 'insane idea', as mark Brearley qualified it[852], to retain the structure of the 1974 library. It had been bargained with the LBBD Assembly that something from the original building would be kept and so when the structure was stripped and Urban Catalyst tried to persuade Jeremy Grint to start afresh 'for better value', Ken Dytor said 'they went ballistic! '"We said we'd keep this library!"'[853] And so the structure for the residential part of the building had to piggyback the existing structure—only visible now from the presence of columns in the main open space of the BLC and in the library stores—effectively creating the need for a three-storey high arcade space on the north side of the building. And so this condition was exploited both by AHMM—who would probably never have convinced the developer to give the extra money required for the structure—and muf, as a threshold condition in which their idea of the civic could take a more concrete aesthetic form.

[851] Woodman.
[852] INT20100727.
[853] Ken Dytor, INT20110616.

L. FRAGMENTS OF THE EVERYDAY

The bulk of activity on the Square is roughly between the hours of 10am and 7pm. There is usually a spike in activity around noon and another between 3pm and 6pm when people are on their way back from work and children come back from school. Observations of the Square between these hours suggest the project is a success: people linger, children play, if the weather is nice some are having lunch on the benches, smoking and taking a break from work in the surrounding buildings, etc. Observations of the Square outside of these hours suggests the opposite. Only few people walk through the place in the morning on their way to the station, or from the station on their way to work in the Town Hall, BLC or health centre. Late at night even fewer people are seen, usually single persons or couples, walking through and only occasionally lingering on one of the benches. In other words, the Town Square seems to work in these two fairly predictable ways given its position in the Town Centre: moving between other places or having something to do with the surrounding facilities. The library is open until 9pm on certain weekdays. For a while the Tulip Café remained open until 7pm but during 2010 started closing at 4pm. The new Apprentice café is open until 7pm, but since business seems to be as it was for the Tulip a reduction of their opening hours could be immanent. Activity increases significantly on market days and during market hours. The weekend is usually less busy than normal week days (with market) given that the Town Hall and One-Stop-Shop are closed. Sunday is the least busy. There is no market and the library is only open for very few hours.

Early morning. Rare customers at the Tulip (opened at 7am) having coffee before starting work. At this time, 7:30am, only about one person every twenty seconds comes across the square. It does pick up nearer to 8am with more commuters and kids on bicycles going to school. A rubbish collector wheels her cart across the square stopping to grab scattered rubbish. 9am, queues of people at both doors of the BLC, waiting for them to open. Saturday morning, 7am, the only activity on the Square is Sid the porter taking out the wheelie bins from the Ropeworks.

From 10am to 1pm activity picks up significantly. When the Lemonade building and phase two (contract two) were still under construction you could see construction workers taking their lunches around 10:30am on the Folly steps. At this time there is increased movement back and forth into the BLC either for the One-Stop-Shop or the library. Lots of families with young children not yet in school. Lots of people with shopping bags and trolleys moving between Axe Street and the market. Also at this time and during the warmer months the sun is high just behind the Town Hall and the parvis and the BLC, Ropeworks and Bath House are drenched in light. This is the time when I

usually encounter photographers or film crews. Nobody seems to linger much more than for a few minutes, mostly passers-by resting on one of the benches for a minute. And then at lunch time, between 11:30am and 1pm it is one of the busier time of day. The café is usually quite busy depending on the day of the week. But weather permitting the outdoor tables are packed and people are eating packed lunches on the benches. There is a lot more lingering in all areas of the Square. During the weekend and while the café was open on Saturday that sort of scene would repeat, again given collaborative weather. On Sunday the library is the only thing open but you still have quite a lot of people using the Square around lunch time and kids playing. Here are two examples of my fieldnotes, on two Saturdays almost a year apart:

> Saturday, 26 September 2009. 10am, the Square is almost empty. Notably less busy than on weekdays. Two families meet in the Square and the kids (8 of them of various backgrounds) appropriate the steps of the Town Hall as play area. 12 noon, the outdoor café tables are full. Children are playing on stage. Two men are sitting on the leftmost edge of the Folly, in the shade. A motorcycle comes roaring out from the right side of the Town Hall and drives onto the plaza. The rider stops and looks around as though realising he should not be there, then roars down the arcade. A few groups have formed around me in the café. They are all men. Some Turkish and some East European. They discuss, drink coffee and tea, shake hands, exchange seats. The café has evidently become a recognised meeting place. 1pm, most people have left the café. The two men in the shade of the trees by the Folly are still there, drinking.

> Saturday, 17 April 2010. 11am, arboretum is completely in shade. Plaza is all sun. I think this is the least busy I've seen the Square. Of course it is a Saturday, but it is surprising. A pregnant woman sits on the bench in the shade near the BLC entrance with her young daughter and baby in stroller. She reads a story to the girl before entering the building. Girl walks to automatic door, stands, and say's 'open up please'. Door doesn't move. 'Why won't it open for me?' Mom walks toward door and it opens. The few people walking through are carrying shopping bags or buggies. A female jogger crosses the Square, the first I've seen since I've been visiting, I think. Lots of families. Lots of strollers and kids. Afro-Caribbean families all dressed up walking from the Gascoigne apparently going to church or community halls. A woman with the full burka and her young son walk to BLC and cross paths with two little old white ladies. The scene is great. The only people who stop and linger sit for a minute to rest before starting off again. A flurry of activity at 11:30am. I've only seen four people sit on benches in 40 minutes (not including me). Finally a South Asian woman in an Iceland uniform comes and sits next to me, she smiles. She is soon joined by her husband who comes out of the BLC. Soon after a man comes out of BLC and sits opposite. They will all be there with me for another 30 minutes. The couple eats a packed lunch. A woman walks from the Axe Street direction directly to the closed café doors, obviously expecting it to be open.

The peak of activity, after lunch, is when the flow of children and families starts around 3:30pm. Even if most of them do not linger very long, children will run through the space, climb, jump and play on almost anything that changes the topography: steps, rises, trees, benches. The movement to and from the BLC also picks up slightly. It is also at this time that a few Council workers from the Town Hall will usually take a coffee break on the Square. Most of them will get coffee at the BLC café. One day two men from the Town Hall and one woman from the One-Stop-Shop came to sit beside me. They went on to have a conversation about the coming elections, making comments mostly about the BNP but spurred on by the passage of Michael Barnbrook, Richard's father, on the Square. They identify a few people (all visible minorities) on the Square speaking of 'that one', 'these two'. The woman recognises one man (who could be South Asian) fancily dressed with a straw hat and a tie. One man asks 'who is that guy' and she says that he sometimes comes in and reads the newspapers in the library. The same man mutters something and laughs. They get up and thank the woman for this 'confidential discussion'. Café tables will not be as packed as lunch time, but a few groups and individual still linger. A group of four East Europeans, three men and one woman are sitting at a café table drinking Coca Cola, coffee and smoking cigarettes. The flow of families and playing children will wane but their presence is still significant until 6 or even 7pm. Between 5 and 6pm there is another surge of movement from people leaving work in the Town Hall, the BLC or the health centre on their way to the car park on London Road or the station. On some days you can spot Jeremy Grint leave Town Hall and walk through the arboretum. This remarkably more intense later afternoon activity only really takes place during the week days, not at the weekend when the various facilities and organisations around the Square and schools are closed. On Saturdays you do get a bit more activity around 5pm when the market and the library close. The following excerpts are from my fieldnotes made during afternoon and early evening hours:

> Friday, 25 September 2009. 4pm, I sit on the steps of the Folly and enjoy the puzzled faces of people walking by, looking up. A man comes and sit next to me. I notice the first signs of occupation in the Bath House building: three balconies show suitcases, laundry, washing equipment. A blind man arrives on the Square along the Bath House. He seems to have never been here. He is confused by the stage steps, stops and recollects. He finds his way to the middle of the plaza and walks toward the library. A woman and a young girl cry out his name and run to him. They embrace and walk to the library. Nathan (met at the Molten Festival 2009) skates in from the direction of the Magistrates Court and trips on corrugated pavement in front of stage. He waits there for a minute, looking back and forth between the pavement and the people on the Square, smiling, telling a silent joke. 4:30pm I walk over to Nathan

and ask him how the Festival went. He makes no sense. I make a polite exit and walk into the library.

Monday, 2 November 2009. 3:30pm, in café. Lots of people passing through Square. Same old. No lingering though, it's cold outside. Formally dressed woman enters square from East Street. Looks out of place. She must be going to Town Square. She is. Families and families travelling through. So many strollers. 4pm, I see a black police officer for the first time walk across the Square.

Wednesday, 21 April 2010. 4:30pm While Mary and I have our tea [at the Tulip Café] a scene breaks out in the plaza with a group of dodgy looking white people. Some shouting between woman and man as kid watches. Two PCSOs walk by, slow down, say something, the woman shouts back, they keep walking. Mary attempts to avoid them altogether. She tells me not to look because they will come here and give us trouble. I can tell she feels really bothered. She tells me she is not scared in the area. 'We live in the nice part.'

Monday, 10 May 2010. At Tulip Café with Eric. 'Where are these people from?' he asks. This is the first time he ever sits in the café and watches the locals. He would have thought that the café would have worked better with all the residents upstairs. I realise that although the vast majority of residents of the buildings are from South Asia, you hardly ever see them in the café. Eric is mesmerized by two Albanian girls sitting at one of the exterior tables chain-smoking.

Friday, 14 May 2010. 2pm, a truck offering health advice is parked on the Square in front of the stage. The side is open for people to walk in. A table, parasol, and chairs are arranged outside. A photography team paces the Square looking for good view points. They look up the clock tower and point to the Lemonade building. 2:30pm, in café. An ambulance rolls past in front of me in the arcade. Arrives on Square, turns around and drives back to Ripple Road through the arcade. The driver seems to laugh as though they thought they could get through. A white Ford station wagon is parked on the Square, two men are unloading cases of beverages. A police van is parked by the side of the Folly. Three police officers are debating something near the wooden gate (the one for which the key has been lost). Another officer sits on one of the back seats with a man who was just brought in earlier from the market area and looks like he's in handcuffs. Paul from Ardmore is on site, opens the latch door on the stage and steps in. There is a sort of buzz on the Square today. 3pm, now a fire truck parks behind the Magistrates Court. Fireman steps out and walks to the market. 3:30pm, Rob Whiteman pulls up to the Town Hall in his Ford minivan. Steps out in a suit and tie but shirt untucked. Another van on the Square. It's starting to look like a car park.

Wednesday, 19 May 2010. 3pm A limousine on the Square. Another Mayor's car. Probably has to do with all the visitors to the town centre today. People inside the café speculate as to whose car it is. 3:30pm Lots of kids in transit after school passing through Square and running onto stage. 4pm A 60 year old man on the Square attempts to shake hands and say hello to passers–by without much success. He does it for about half an hour before eventually sitting on one of the benches. Man in

> secret garden sitting down for a snack. Three men come by and fetch a bag from the pissing corner, put stuff into it take it and cross Square. A teen has a younger boy pinned to the ground near the tree stump fountain as two other boys watch. A man walks by and talks to the teen who lets go of the boy. The boy goes running across the Square with a huge smile on his face followed by his two friends. The man and the teen exchange a few words before they part. It doesn't seem serious at all.
>
> Wednesday, 24 August 2011. 3pm, the sun is out. More people are passing through. A couple of people are on the stage steps. A father and his kid are playing on the stage with a suitcase. Kids run up the stage, one on a scooter. Most people walking by. I am almost by myself in the café. People do come in once in a while. A group of six is sitting across from me, having a project review. Showing plans. Maybe architects, planners, Council representatives… Anyway, the Apprentice has the same clientele as the Tulip. Wi-Fi doesn't reach the café anymore. Kid climbing up the stage balustrade. Incites other kids to join. I ask the waitress how is business. OK, but slow at the moment. She expects it will pick up once the kids go back to school. They stay open until 7pm. Hopefully this will last. The teenagers who work the kitchen seem to be locals: a group of teenagers walk by and the guy in the kitchen walks out to say hi. 4pm, kids 8-12 are everywhere running around. On scooters, on bikes, on skateboards. The woman with kids at the fallen tree lives near Ripple Road. Her kids love to come here and play on the logs. When I ask her if I can take a photo of her kids playing she not only says yes but also moves into the photo with her son who is in a wheelchair. The Lithuanian men who seem to be already drunk are also enjoying posing for me. As soon as I ask, one of them starts posing. He then asks for a portrait with his friend. I take it, chat for a while, shake hands and leave.

By 8pm the Square is silent. The last little bit of activity has quieted down around 7-7:30pm. Even when events are taking place in the Town Hall, an assembly meeting or some sort of celebration, there is hardly anything happening outside. Few people walk by, fewer linger. This quietness will stretch into the evening and night. By 10pm the Square is the same with the occasional person walking through. The only people who linger seem to be lovers or smokers. Occasionally in the morning, especially on Sunday, you can find rubbish left behind from the night before on the arboretum benches: empty beer cans, Red Bull cans, packets of crisps, and once a plastic bag full of litter neatly tied to one of the 'ambiguous' balustrades.

M. A MODEL TOWN SQUARE

Workshop participants

People present at the 21 September 2010 workshop included representatives from the ACD (Michael McCormack, Willian de Ritter, Julia Pearson), Met Police (Elizabeth Chalk), Libraries and the BLC (Zoinul Abidin, Nazeem Ullah), as well as Janice Hunte (LBBD events coordinator), Lorraine Pulham (LBBD Estate Officer), Fred Manson, artist Orly Orbach and myself. People and organisations invited had included elected members of the Assembly for Abbey and Gascoigne wards, Councillor Jeanne Alexander, Councillor Collins (responsible for open spaces), muf, DfL, the Town Centre manager Ralph Cook, representatives from Community Cohesion, Arboriculture, Parks, Community Engagement, Maintenance and Planning. Out of fourteen confirmations, only seven turned up. The only elected member of the Council who turned up (Laila Butt, Abbey Ward) came in late and stayed for ten minutes. Five others who were not on the list came at the invitation of Paul Hogan, Head of the ACD.

Maintenance issues

What makes the issue of maintenance more complex, as it is apparent from my discussions with representatives from the local authorities, is that no one is quite certain who is supposed to be in charge. And if somebody does take charge, then other issues come up. For example, union conventions include a clause about how far a street cleaner can reach within a fenced off area, i.e. the tree pits. Lorraine Pulham:

> The shrubbery for health and safety has to be within about roughly an arm's length in so they can get in and reach because they are not allowed to step into and take, really.[854]

Or more absurdly, that rubbish knows no boundaries when the wind picks up:

> TBK: But does maintenance and rubbish collection seem to be clear now?
>
> Lorraine Pulham: No.
>
> TBK: With the limits of who picks up the rubbish–
>
> LP: No.
>
> TBK: –in the Square or in the arboretum?
>
> LP: Well you've got outside the Tulip Café whereby they have got a... I don't know the distance between the glass and where their tables end,

[854] WRK20100921

> but they are responsible for that, because if people drop their sandwich packs and stuff like that.
>
> Janice Hunte: But then what if the wind blows it that way? It's all those silly things.
>
> LP: You have got the people who clean the Town Hall steps and then different people who clean the Square.[855]

Remarkably, the fuzzy boundaries between the various areas of the Town Square project have also led to fuzzy boundaries in maintenance, with Council representatives not knowing well which department is supposed to be responsible for which area. Early one morning in April 2010, a rubbish collector, a black woman of about fifty, wheels her cart across the Square stopping to grab scattered rubbish. I ask but she does not know either if she is supposed to pick up rubbish in the tree pits. She leaves it.

Defining the space of the Town Square

This exchange is from my workshop on 21 September 2010 (the excised parts were smaller tangential exchanges about possible uses and management issues):

> Loraine Pulham: You would only market this Town Square if there was something actually happening here. Why would we in any shape or form promote it if there's nothing really going on here. It's just the Town Square... and unless there is something going on I don't think people know about it.
>
> Nazeem Ullah: There is a wider engagement possibility, and that is how people connect to the civic life on a local level. You have two key civic buildings: the Town Hall and the BLC. So I don't necessarily think something has to always be going on in the Square, but it could be a place that connects people to civic life on a local level. And I don't think we're exploiting that.
>
> [...]
>
> Zoinul Abidin: I agree with you that the possibilities are huge, but I'm talking from a resident's perspective. Consultation and dialogue is when you do it and you don't listen to them and you do what you like anyway. That's the approach in people's mentality. I suppose my view is how do you curate the Town Square in terms of the public saying 'this is our brand, this is our pride and joy.' Then they would make use of it in a positive sense. Then when you have a dialogue, when you have shows, when you have various stuff going on people appreciate or people say 'I'll meet you down at town square'... to have a chat or whatever. It becomes a meeting point. It becomes a hub.
>
> [...]

[855] WRK20100921

NU: But the Town Square is relatively young, isn't it? So it's going to take a bit of time until people start to identify it.

Janice Hunte: I think you need to establish that brand and have a programme across the year so that people identify the Square with events, activities, somewhere to get information so that that is its identity.

LP: That's exactly it, you're right.

[...]

ZA: I think initially the Council as an entity should promote the space as an open space.

Fred Manson: Good point.

ZA: As an open space where you meet. It's a social space, a community hub, an informal space, however you want to call it. Because once you brand it like that, then other stuff naturally comes on board. Because if we get that bit of it right, then the actual planning of events and activities... because you get more people who have ownership buying in terms of the area, and then they say 'oh why can't you do this, or why can't we have that' or 'I know a band'... Then the flow of ideas comes. When you do it the other way around it will be more complicated because then it's the show that's the important thing, not the space. The space just happens to be there.

LP: But then how do we market the space?

ZA: That's why it needs to be branded.

LP: Definitely, 100%.

ZA: It needs its own brand and to be its own entity.

FM: The things that come here should be complimentary to its primary function which is a public open space which anyone can come to. Anything which limited the number of people who can come is probably not a good thing, and things that would put a large number of people off wouldn't be a good thing. So you're saying 'how would you make this a better public space?' rather 'how do you use a public space for different purposes than what it is for, which is a public space?'

N. INTERVIEW WITH TRACEY MCNULTY

Excerpt from INT20091019:

> Tracey McNulty: It eventually got to a position, although after several years, the Council's attitude had completely turned around. It was not considering any public space without thinking about the design quality and the involvement of artists. And not the involvement of artists in order to create art for a space but in order to inject a different viewpoint. My role was to change this view that artists were about making things more beautiful it was more about making them understand that without their different viewpoint, without a discursive voice within a design team there would be something missing. Local authorities tend to have very traditional attitudes towards landscape design and who is a proper designer. And that's mainly because of the existence of professional qualifications. Within the local authority you have landscape designers who work in a particular way and they carry their professional membership so those who do not have the proper membership are seen not as genuine in a way, not as accountable, not as aware of the various issues that need to be taken into account when designing for the public realm.
>
> TBK: Do you see this as a symptom of approaching design in the public realm as problem solving? It seems the artist can have a very different position to that of the professional who is bound by—
>
> TMcN: Legality. A lot of the in-house professionals design around legal requirements. So you have the correct width of the foot path. You have non slip materials. Your planting is low maintenance and is not likely to be stolen because it's not that attractive. And it needs to be easily replaced if it is stolen. And this leads to the municipal attitude towards what the public realm is. Also it is about designing the space to really limit the amount of non-controlled activities that can happen in there. They tend not to design spaces for congregation. They tend to design spaces that can easily get a person from A to B, but not to spend time in any given place. So we had lots of internal battles myself and Peter.
>
> TBK: You mean within the Council?
>
> TMcN: With our colleagues, yes.
>
> TBK: You worked more closely with Regeneration. Were they the ones you had to convince?
>
> TMcN: It was much more widespread. With our Regeneration colleagues…I was pushing on open doors. The ones who were the hardest to convince were the ones in engineering. Not so much planning, but engineering and Parks and Open Places. They always did what they did in the same way and they had been doing for decades. Then suddenly we were saying let's bring an artist in. And their idea of an artist was someone who might carve a bench. It was really really hard to describe that actually we were talking about changing the way they were thinking about their public space. 'No, we don't want the artist to come in and do something decorative in the space you are going to create, what we're going to do is have the artist change the way you think about that public

space!' And that is quite a confrontational scenario. They felt threatened. Even though we were being very diplomatic about it and starting up with a conversation. 'We have an opportunity to do this new square, come to these meetings, come and have lunch with us, come and lets talk about all the opportunities.' It was difficult because the people on the edges were thinking it's not the right time for me to get involved. 'I only get involved at this stage of the project. And I'm not ready for you to get involved in what I'm doing yet.' So we were trying to change the staged approach that normally took place.

TBK: Did it work?

TMcN: In the end…but it was hard. Even talking to you now I'm remembering the pain!

O. CONSULTATION

The 25 April 2007 edition of the *Barking and Dagenham Post* has, in its 'legal and public notices' section on page fifty-three, the notice for a planning application submitted to the Borough for a mixed-use development at Barking Town Square. The notice is composed of text only with no visuals. The notice invites anyone who 'wishes to make representations about the application' to send these by regular mail. The comments are to be sent within twenty-one days of the publication of the notice, so until 16 May 2007.[856] Considering that the plans and documents are available for consultation between the hours of 9am and 4:30pm Monday to Friday, this rules out anybody who is employed during normal business hours. The Borough also has an online service to view and comment on applications (I do not know the date it was made operational) but the link is not given on the notice. To view the online application, one would have to already know about it or routinely check the LBBD website. What is interesting about this application is that it was submitted to the LTGDC for their 7 May 2007 meeting as already approved by the LBBD. At this point in time, the LTGDC was the effective planning authority for the Town Square project. The LTGDC report simply states, under 'consultations part a)' that there are no comments from residents since the application has yet to be announced to the LBBD control board.[857] Not only is the application hard to get to unless one is looking for it, but it also appears that comments sent in would have been excluded from the LTGDC's meeting.

This example of apparent inefficiency in the consultation process is nothing specific about the Town Square project. The following passage from my interview with Dave Mansfield is worth quoting in full. Although he starts by describing the 'peculiarity' of the Town Square consultation, he eventually ends up extrapolating to the generic consultation process:

> I think it's one of the peculiarities of this scheme as well, perhaps in terms of public consultation, because when we receive any application we undertake public consultation which will be through press and site notices and by direct letter consultation to neighbouring occupiers, and in this case that may have been 200 or 300 letters that went out, because there is not a huge amount of residents nearby, and the surprising thing, perhaps not surprising for Barking, is the very low response rate. Typically we might get one or two responses, if that. And they will be very parochial. And they will be issues such as somebody lives over a shop on Ripple Road being particularly concerned about, I don't know, how it's going to affect the drainage service road at the back. Those sorts of micro issues rather than anything more substantive. Whilst of course

[856] Three weeks is the standard minimum time period given for comments in the LBBD, other local authorities may vary who usually deal with planning application within 8 to 13 weeks.
[857] London Thames Gateway Development Corporation, *Report No. LTGDC/2007/PC26* (LTGDC, 2007).

> over the years in the comments pages of the press people make comments about the scheme, good and bad, perhaps more bad than good, when it comes to actually engaging with us on the planning application there is a terrible silence! In that respect it was quite difficult to engage with the public. I've had sometimes long conversations with people, almost anecdotally, over the counter, or in the street, but it may have been because there was such a series of planning applications. I've almost lost count! People just perhaps thought 'it's going to happen anyway, get on with it!' What's the point of yet another letter coming in on this scheme?
>
> TBK: It certainly rings true because I suspect that if you lost count, people who would've responded might have just gave up. Some people I've spoken to had found that the language of the consultation packages had gone very technical and they felt that there was problem of translation.
>
> Dave Mansfield: I've got to say the letters of consultation, which are purely standard letters generated by a computer package, would be exactly the same as for a rear extension as for a town square. The only thing that will be different will be the description of the development, a bit lengthier.[858]

The weak reply rate for planning application consultation with local residents and business owners seems constant through the ten years of the Town Square project. At least five major applications were submitted by Urban Catalyst and Redrow between 2002 and 2007, and the average rate of response is less than 0.01%. As Dave Mansfield said, they usually receive about two 'parochial' responses concerning individual properties or the affect to businesses.[859] This note, from the initial Urban Catalyst and AHMM application, is typical:

> The application was advertised in the press and on site and 310 neighbouring residential and commercial occupiers within a 100 metre radius of the site were directly notified. As a result only 2 written replies were received. The owners of 16-20 Ripple Road (Simon Sales Stores) enquired as to the affect the proposal would have on their property (it will be demolished). The Primary Care Trust who occupy premises at the Clockhouse broadly support the development, particularly the lifelong learning centre facility. However, concern was expressed that sufficient parking, including disabled driver and passenger bays, was provided and that access to the car park at the Clockhouse was maintained.[860]

Two other LTGDC reports from 2007 show that not a single comment was received from consultation with local businesses and residences.[861] But this is not always the case with what may be called special consultant groups. The reserve matters application for changes

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[858] INT20100511.

[859] Frustratingly, the report for planning application 06/01249 which included muf's design does not have comments from local residents as the application had not yet been reported to LBBD development control board. No further notes are appended to the package so one has to suspect that the rate of response was similar to previous applications.

[860] LBBD planning application reference 02/00653/OUT.

[861] Reports number LTGDC-7-081-FUL and LTGDC-00X-06.

to the Ropeworks and BLC (after the Redrow take over) includes extensive comments by the Urban Design Group.[862] Other extensive comments on the various applications for the Town Square project include the fire department, play consultants, health and safety consultants, and English Heritage.

But with respect to individual participation, I found that the consultation process (described above by Dave Mansfield) and the dismal rate of response reflect the disillusion of consultation felt by some of my informants. Joyce Petchey, who liked to spend time reading and commenting on planning applications, had stopped participating in consultation because the documents were becoming increasingly difficult to understand and far too numerous, a phenomenon described in the literature as 'consultation fatigue'.[863] Another informant had the same complaint, noting that the technical jargon necessary to understand the many documents was so difficult to grasp that he had just given up on the idea of participating altogether.[864]

LBBD Housing Officer Jennie Coombs gives her evaluation of consultation in the Borough:

> I wasn't involved in the original consultation at the beginning of the project [for the Town Square]. I have been involved in some for the Town Square. I think we could have done better in the way we promoted it or the way that we went out and engaged with people and got their views about what was happening. Generally that is a comment I would put across everything we do that we could engage better.
>
> TBK: Well it is difficult—
>
> JC: Yes because you go out and you hear things that you don't want to hear! People say 'I don't want that space, why would I want that, I wouldn't use it, I don't want it' and then you have an issue around getting people to understand what it's all about, why are you bringing it forward, what sort of role it will have in the hierarchy of the different places in town. It is quite a difficult thing. One of the things I always say about consultation is that, and I've done loads of consultation in this borough over the years, is that you very rarely get a true snapshot of the public coming to talk to you about things. You get a certain selection of people and they are always the same people. They tend to be the older generation and that that doesn't necessarily always give you a very balanced view because people that you'd like to hear from, the younger ethnic minorities, the economically active population, are far too busy going to work and taking their kids and doing other things to actually have the time and energy to devote to consultation events. Kelly Moore's been leading some stuff over at Thames View for the masterplan there and I think that is a project where we have actually, she's done really

[862] Report number LTGDC-00X-6.
[863] Pete Duncan and Sally Thomas, *Neighbourhood Regeneration: Resourcing Community Involvement* (The Policy Press, 2000), p. 5.
[864] Nils, INT20091202.

> really well with the company she's working with to do that in terms of targeting those people, having meetings at different times, really working hard with the schools to get projects that deal with the regeneration. The kids come home from school and say 'look I'm doing this for regeneration, I'm painting a picture and that's going to be on the hoarding'. They started thinking about it in different ways and I think we could learn quite a lot in the future from the way that we've done that. It has been a good way of going out and reaching people that don't automatically come out and sit down at meetings and talk about what they'd like to see in the town centre or what they think of the project. Another thing I've noticed happening now is that we've got a residents Urban Design [Forum] that's been trained and has a capacity to comment on design and new projects can go to them and you get some feedback that way. So I think we've started to build layers where we are trying successfully to get more meaningful consultation.[865]

There are a two major elements we can pull from this long comment. The issue of reaching a representative cross section of the resident population and the issue of language and communication. What is interesting, is that Jennie Coombs' critique of the process is more or less similar to the one expressed by my informants. There appears to be a need for alternative and adaptive methods of communication between the Council, the planning department and the communities of the Borough. But how the issue of communication is expressed by Jennie Coombs belies the fact that consultation is not about dialogue, but first about getting a pre-determined point across. Her comment implies that the person being consulted does not understand what the local authorities are doing and must first be informed before any dialogue can occur, but it seems that this critical point is never reached. Again, any consultative practice is not effective if there is no feedback loop into the process.

It is good to keep in mind the above discussions took place between 2009 and 2011, at a time when consultation practices were being intensely diversified in the Borough. These other forms of consultation seem to have risen from government policies in the late 1990s and early 2000s in parallel with the rhetoric of the Sustainable Communities plan. One of the factors for sustainable communities listed document reads:

> Effective engagement and participation by local people, groups and businesses, especially in the planning, design and long-term stewardship of their community, and an active voluntary and community sector.[866]

But no strict guidelines are given. So apart from the standard consultation practices there appears to be (at least in the document) no consensus on more direct participatory practices. The practices developed in the Borough include among others the creation of special consultation groups like Neighbourhood Management, housing groups, citizen

[865] INT20100305.
[866] Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), 'Sustainable Communities', p. 5.

forums, the Urban Design Forum, youth forums, stakeholders' group like the Town Centre consultation group or more recently the Friends of Abbey Green, diversified paper initiatives with glossy publications (in addition to plans) distributed in Council buildings, the Tell Us pamphlet (a mail-in questionnaire), the creation of a Council newspaper (first the *Citizen* then *theNews*) and special consultation and engagement through art programmes. While these would seem to increase communication between some select groups and the Borough, it is debatable how effective they are especially keeping in mind that the comments above by planning officers and residents were given at a moment of increased consultation in the Borough.

P. COMMUNITY ARCHITECTURE

One of the most significant moments in the development of participation in the UK is the Community Architecture movement (CA) whose principles and critiques perhaps highlight best the complexities of opening the processes of planning and architecture to other voices. Started in the 1970s, the movement paradoxically reached its apogee in the mid-1980s given the housing and development policies of the new Tory government of Margaret Thatcher on the one hand, including the right-to-buy scheme and the newly created UDCs, and the endorsement of the government, professional associations, the development sector and the Prince of Wales on the other.[867] The main provocation of CA may have been the promotion of future users as clients and developers, disrupting the paternalistic stance of the welfare state in housing provision. However, the gross oversight of CA is to assume that everyone in this deregulated a-political model has the same means of participating in the process. While it sees the freedom of individuals and groups to shape their environment as a good thing, it fails to make the distinction between the equality of individuals as emancipated human beings and the inequality of individuals under a free market economy.[868] In this sense it largely underestimates the power of the private sector in development and is utopian in its overestimation of the voluntary sector's agency in development.[869]

CA is virulently criticised by Jeremy Till who argues that the movement in no way differentiates itself from the utopianism of modern architecture and that the architect retains a privileged and authoritative position vis-à-vis the user, negating each other's 'expert knowledge'.[870] In this sense, CA does not break down barriers between the architect and the user but in fact constructs a new one. This is a rather theoretical point, but Till expresses that this appears to be a problem of anyone working within binary systems: the architect/user binary is replaced by community-architect/user. In no way does the user accede to power and thus, for Till, CA actually consists of a 'betrayal of the rights of the user.'[871] CA seems to metaphorically imply that the community might be 'constructed'… the user is given a better environment which would then lead to a better society. But for

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[867] Nick Wates and Charles Knevitt, *Community Architecture : How People Are Creating Their Own Environment* (London: Penguin, 1987); Jim Sneddon and Caroline Theobald, eds., *Building Communities: The First International Conference on Community Architecture Planning and Design, [London, November 26th-29th, 1986]* (London: CAIS, 1987).

[868] This is the same mistake, it can be argued, made by the authors of 'Non-Plan' who supported deregulation in planning. See Reyner Banham and others, 'Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom', in *Non-Plan: Essays on Freedom, Participation and Change in Modern Architecture and Urbanism*, ed. by Jonathan Hughes and Simon Sadler (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2000).

[869] See Graham Towers, *Building Democracy: Community Architecture in the Inner Cities* (Taylor & Francis, 1995).

[870] Till, 'Architecture of the Impure Community'. I concentrate here only on part of Till's argument against Community Architecture, focusing on the relationship between architect and user.

[871] Till, 'Architecture of the Impure Community', p. 68.

this the economic and social inequalities that exist between those participating in the process have to be addressed head on.

Till's critique of CA shows a fundamental difference in the conception of the 'user' from the authors of *Community Architecture*. While the former implies an *anarchic* user, free from authority and with the right of self-determination in creating their own environment, the latter describes a member of a homogeneous association who is willing to create and manage their own environment. In this sense, community architecture does have a utopian foundation in that it believes in a homogeneous public willing to cooperate—what Till labels the 'purified community'. His critique is actually not a far cry from early reviews of *Community Architecture*. Both Paul Rodaway and M. D. Uncles, writing in 1988 and 1989 respectively, applaud the optimism of Wates and Knevitt but remind readers that reality appears differently. Uncles warns that there is no single homogeneous community:

> How are we to adjudicate between the claims of one community and another—between, say, local people living in the London Docklands and the incomers who hope to regenerate the derelict land? In short, the interests of 'the community' are not as one-dimensional as the authors imply.[872]

Rodaway actually finds a paradox in the foundation of the movement: 'community architecture builds, or brings together, communities but is also dependent on a prior sense of, or propensity to be, a community.'[873] In other words, CA brings forth a good society but a good society also needs to exist prior to CA happening.[874] In this sense it would be difficult to imagine a socially and economically diverse community forming from the precepts of CA. After all, as Uncles asks, which 'community' has precedence over the other: the residents of Newham without financial means or the private developers of the docklands?

[872] Uncles.
[873] Rodaway, p. 345.
[874] It is interesting to note that this is almost an identical criticism as Claire Bishop's criticism of Grant Kester's 'non-conflictual and convivial community'.

Q. FOLLY

It was Peter Watson, recalls Katherine Clarke, who had the idea of involving the local masonry college in the development of the Folly. Anthony Carruthers, a masonry teacher at Barking and Dagenham College, remembers how Katherine came to see the faculty in March 2006.[875] They arranged a meeting where she presented her vision and the staff advised her on what could and could not be done from the sketches she showed.

> It was a case of making it work for what she had. So she only had a certain number of plinths, certain special plinths, where we were going to run them, how many arches we were going to form.[876]

Anthony was quite effusive about Katherine's enthusiasm for the work and commented how the attitude of the staff changed—from what we may infer was a slight prejudicial position *vis-à-vis* the artist—when they realised the project was going to go through.

> Our attitude did change because at the time we just thought it was pie in the sky. She knew what she wanted and at the next meeting she would come along and she had other ideas and she listened to what we were saying.[877]

Three sample panels were constructed by apprentices from the College to test various types of jointing, cobbling and lime mortar. These were then presented to Katherine and representatives of the LBBD who decided on the more appropriate technique of making the wall 'look old'. It was also agreed with the College that once a brick contractor had been commissioned that one student would be hired to work on the construction of the final wall. Finding a mason to take on the project proved difficult, as Katherine explains:

> There was such a lot of work going on in London that there was a deficit of skills and we were just interviewing people and couldn't find anyone. And we had to have it finished with the completion of phase one of Town Square. It was just ludicrous. We interviewed bricklayers and they just said 'no we can't do it, we haven't got the skills, we haven't got the time'.[878]

It was eventually Ardmore, the main contractor for Barking Central, who suggested hiring Shane Moss who was at the time working on Bath House. After speaking with Shane, it appeared incredible that someone who turned out to be perfect for the job had been on site the whole time muf and the LBBD were frantically looking for someone. Although this might not be inferred from Shane's initial reaction: 'When I first saw the drawings when

[875] Anthony Carruthers, 'Press Release: The "Folly" in Barking College', 2007.
[876] Anthony Carruthers, INT20100415.
[877] Anthony Carruthers, INT20100415.
[878] INT20100331.

[the partner at Excel Brickworks] brought them in I thought he was mad.'[879] The drawings that were brought to Shane at this point were, as he recalls, quite detailed. By this time the proposal had evolved quite a lot from the initial sketches and had been reviewed by structural engineers, and so the drawings must have been close to construction drawings.

There was, as Shane says, very little room to manoeuvre. As best as he can recall, the finished wall looks almost identical to the original drawing he saw. Where he was given space for input was on fabrication, more precisely on the way to make the wall look old.

> So I started it and got a small section up so the architects came out to have a look. I met Katherine Clarke. And I don't want to be rude to architects, but sometimes they… The work is on site and they don't deal with it. One thing I liked about Katherine, she said 'this is what I want but I haven't got a clue about materials and how to do it. That's your job. I want you to create my vision,' which was nice. Obviously she wanted to give input, but to come up with ideas on how to make it look old, 'that's up to you. I want you to do it.'[880]

There is a wonderful passage during our interview where Shane recounts how he got into the project of making it look old, experimented and took cues from partially damaged walls by the side of the road.

> Sometimes only a small section of a wall would be affected by the weather. Why that is I don't know. Then when we went back the next day we started to just play with how we wanted to do it. We did have freedom basically to do what we wanted. If there was a slight difference to what it looked like on the drawing—for example on the main doorway arch, there was a lot more brickwork, sort of special brick that followed the arch around and there was only a small section that was damaged but they didn't have enough good bricks so we had to, and that's my favourite part, above the arch, there, that I think does look original to me, the way it came out. When you look at the top section, the V section, the brickwork that's there… If you build a wall with many skins. If you have an existing wall and you build a wall behind it, when you push the brick down obviously the mortar inside gets squashed. So we knew that when we were laying the bricks, because it was supposed to have been the section behind where the mortar would be rough so we didn't take it away because that's what it would look like. If the wall had fell away the brickwork behind would look like that. The tiles that are over the arch are meant to be there as a repair for the wall section that fell. So above it we built it such that it had that effect that it had crumbled away.[881]

[879] Shane Moss, INT20090928.
[880] INT20090928. Katherine Clarke indeed did not meet Shane Moss until she went for her first construction site visit (INT20100331).
[881] INT20090928.

Figure 79. Last minutes before the opening ceremony of phase one with construction workers putting the finishing touches on the Folly. Peter Watson is second from the left. Photo: Shane Moss

From the moment the contract was given to Excel and Shane started work they had six weeks to complete the job in time for the opening of phase one of the Town Square.[882] The project was already late. Peter Watson recalls that 'it took the same time to build all this [BLC and civic square] that it took to build that wall. We started building that wall in February and everything you can think of went wrong.'[883] It came to a point where Peter left on holiday in July for a month and he recounts thinking that if he came back and nothing had started he would just cancel the whole thing. 'There's no point in me worrying about it. If I come back and it isn't done I'm going to sack it. […] Everybody on the job I'd just sack 'em if it wasn't done.'[884] The wall was halfway up when he came back and so they continued, but not without a mad scramble toward the finish line. As Peter recalls:

> The wall was finished and we were starting to do the pavement. By Monday lunch time I had 30 men working.
>
> TBK: Because you had to deliver for the opening—
>
> PW: On Wednesday afternoon. We had three or four disc cutters going on at the same time. The noise! All day long! We basically finished it an hour before. An hour before we were sweeping in front. All the grout was wet. The grout and pavement was wet. We had a few people standing there making sure people didn't do something to it. It went down to the wire, but we've done it. It was great.[885]

[882] That is according to Shane in our interview (INT20090928). Still according to him they finished the job in five weeks.
[883] INT20100419. Peter Watson is referring to the whole process, not just construction on site. Katherine Clarke visited Barking College for the first time in March.
[884] INT20100419
[885] INT20100419.

R. THE HEART OF BARKING

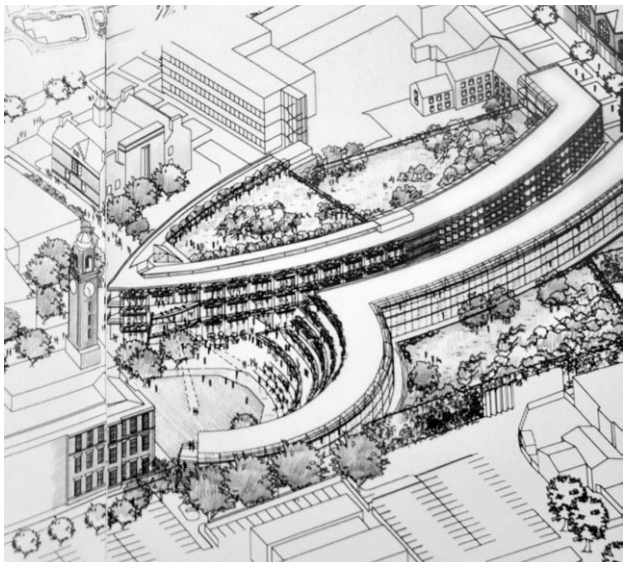

Figure 80. Winning scheme by Avery Associates and Urban Catalyst. Source: LBBD

In March 2000, the winners of the Barking Town Square competition were announced. The team comprised of developer Urban Catalyst, Avery Associates Architects, Gustafson Porter Landscape Architects, and artist Shelagh Wakely were attributed the commission over four other finalists. The press was effusive about the result. The *Barking and Dagenham Post* reported on a 'new heart for Barking', transforming it's 'bleak town square' with 'Barbican style' buildings.[886] The *Barking and Dagenham Recorder* reported on the 'ultra-modern' buildings and the new 'library for the twenty-first century' while adding a touch of local pride and identity by describing the design as 'ship-shape' and quoting Charles Fairbrass, Leader of the Council, who predicted the main building would be known as the 'Barking boat'.[887] The *Architects' Journal* clamoured that Avery had 'triumphed' and 'struck gold' in Barking. The short article focused mainly on expounding the links created by the project in the town centre and described the new town square as a 'community focus' with a 'sense of enclosure'.[888] The praise should not have come as a surprise given the context of the project. If the hyperbolic descriptions of the project as 'futuristic', 'ultra-modern' (local papers) and 'visionary' (local authority) are overlooked, the actual emphasis of the celebration has to be not on design merit, but on regeneration efforts finally taking shape. This announcement was a milestone of regeneration processes started as far back as the mid-1980s with phase two of the Vicarage Field plan.[889]

[886] Harrison, 'A New Heart for Barking'.
[887] James Buttery, 'Town Square Will Be All Ship-shape', *Barking and Dagenham Recorder*, 16 March 2000.
[888] Singmaster, p. 8.
[889] The early 1980s Town Centre AAP calls for a mixed-use retail-led development at Town Square. The plan was eventually adjusted upon consultation with URBED to a residential-led development in the mid-1990s.

S. BECONTREE ESTATE

When the London County Council (LCC) built the massive Becontree Estate between 1921 and 1934, their intention was to have the entire estate under a single local authority.[890] But the estate was built straddling three different urban districts: Barking, Ilford and Dagenham. The Urban District of Dagenham was actually created in 1926, but not after the dissolution of the Dagenham parish into Barking or Ilford had been considered as a way of consolidating authority over Becontree. In 1936, Dagenham was incorporated as a municipal borough, five years after Barking. While the celebrations in Barking attracted visits from the royal family and included an Industry Show and a Pageant (perhaps one of modern Barking's most enduring foundation myths, see also Appendix W) the celebrations in Dagenham seem to have been too modest to make it into any archive or collective memory. That is, if any celebration happened at all. This may be explained, to give one example, by the sense that the Dagenham of 1936 had very little to do with the original parish centred on the Heathway, Old Dagenham's high street. The new Dagenham was the Dagenham of the Becontree Estate. As a measure of this new foundation, the population of Barking in 1911 was four times that of Dagenham. And while Baking's population did increase dramatically with the construction of the Becontree Estate (approximately twofold), it is Dagenham that saw the most drastic increase in its population by almost tenfold, from about 10,000 inhabitants in 1921 to nearly 100,000 in 1931.[891]

[890] Robert K. Home, *A Township Complete in Itself: a Planning History of the Becontree/Dagenham Estate* (Libraries Department, LBBD and School of Surveying, University of East London, 1997). The estate is still to this day the largest public housing project ever built, housing about 100,000 people.

[891] The latter population numbers are from the 1931 census. The estate was built to re-house East London slum dwellers and returning war veterans (under the highly politicised scheme 'homes for heroes'). Although it never was intended to be so, it quickly developed into a 'single-class' estate populated by Ford factory workers. See also Appendix W.

T. POLITICS

I first approached Fred Manson for an interview as he was leaving the ceremony for the Town Square in September 2009. The first thing he said, after I had briefly outlined my research project was along the lines of 'if you want to understand Barking, you have to understand the politics.'

Figure 81. *Barking and Dagenham Post* front page, 12 May 2010

During the days following the 6 May 2010 general elections in the United Kingdom, the greater majority of Barking and London residents sighed with relief. The British National Party (BNP) had been contesting thirty-four of the fifty-one seats in the local Barking Council and both parliamentary seats for the Borough but failed to win any. Major London and national newspapers expressed their relief, commenting primarily on the UK parliament results without holding back on superlatives. They reported on a 'humiliating defeat', a 'dramatic failure', a 'wipe out', a 'crushing defeat'.[892] Nick Griffin, the BNP leader, had decided to run for Barking MP after the relative success of the party in the Borough over the last five years. The choice had brought relentless and excited media attention to what both the *Guardian* and the *Independent* called 'the battle for Barking'.[893] It did seem that for the month preceding the elections unprecedented attention was given to the Borough. Reporters were a common sight in the town centre, with some reporting for overseas

[892] Cahal Milmo, 'BNP in Disarray as Candidates Slump to Defeat in Target Seats', *The Independent* (London, 8 May 2010); Samira Shackle, 'BNP Fails to Secure Seats in Barking and Stoke Central', *The Staggers*, 2010 <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2010/05/bnp-party-final-griffin-defeat> [accessed 29 November 2010].
[893] Cahal Milmo, 'The Battle for Barking', *The Independent* (London, 10 April 2010); Harris.

publications; I met two reporters for the *Washington Post* in the East Street market who later reported on the 'rundown suburban town of Barking on the fringes of East London' and its migrant issues.[894] Activist groups including Hope not Hate and United Against Fascism were also conspicuously present. Both had the backing of hometown celebrity Billy Bragg who seemed to have momentarily moved back into town to support the fight against the BNP, and twice appearing in altercations with BNP councillor Richard Barnbrook.

In the end, Margaret Hodge, the incumbent Labour MP, retained her seat with fifty-four percent of the votes. But what seemed most important for the Borough was not the re-election of Hodge (or the non-election of Griffin) but the election results for the local Assembly. Indeed it was there that the BNP's influence was strongest. In the 2006 local elections the party had managed to win twelve of the thirteen seats it contested in the Borough, its best result across the country. This also meant that the party became the official opposition in the LBBD Assembly. In the 2008 London elections, Richard Barnbrook (BNP, Goresbrook ward) won the first GLA seat for the party. Although the balance of power in the LBBD remained firmly in Labour's favour (they held a majority of thirty-eight seats), the Borough was typecast as a 'BNP stronghold'.[895] Many Londoners from outside Barking and Dagenham I spoke to associated the Borough with the party, regardless of Labour's majority. The simple fact of their presence in the Assembly was enough for the whole of the Borough to *be* BNP. Indeed when I first sat down with Alison Crawshaw at muf and asked about Barking's politics she told me 'Barking is BNP'.

'I am so proud of Barking' said a friend after the elections. For most outsiders, it appeared that the 'natural' order of the Borough's politics had been re-established. Since their creation, both Barking's UK parliament seat (est. 1945) and the LBBD Assembly (est. 1965) have always been held by the Labour Party. Barking MP Margaret Hodge has occupied the seat since winning a majority seventy-two percent in 1994.[896] Since its creation in 1965, the Assembly of the Borough has been held by the Labour Party almost exclusively.[897] The historical industrial vocation of the Borough along with strong union

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[894] Stephano Ambrogi, 'Migrant Issues May Haunt Main Parties at UK Poll', *The Washington Post* (Washington D.C., 16 April 2010).

[895] See for example Fiona Hamilton, 'BNP Hopes of a Breakthrough Dashed as Party Defeated in Target Seats', *The Times*, 7 May 2010; Milmo, 'BNP in Disarray as Candidates Slump to Defeat in Target Seats'; Cahal Milmo, 'Griffin's Future in Doubt as BNP Campaign Implodes', *The Independent*, 8 May 2010; 'The Politics Show: London', *The Politics Show* (London: BBC One, 2010); and Megan French, 'BNP Beaten by Labour in East London Byelections', *Guardian*, 9 July 2010.

[896] Mrs Hodge's subsequent victories were by a continuously decreasing margin reaching 48% in 2005. The BNP first contested the seat in 1997 and achieved their best result in 2005 when Richard Barnbrook received 17% of the votes. For the 2010 general elections, the top three candidates were Mrs Hodge with 54% of the votes, Mr Marcus of the Conservative Party with 18% and Mr Griffin of the BNP with 15%. Source: London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

[897] In the 1990, 1994, and 1998 local elections Labour won over 90% of the seats. The first elected BNP councillor won a by-election in 2004. In 2006, the BNP took 12 seats in the Council, diminish Labour's hold

activity in the area gave stable support to Old Labour. One of my informants, being groomed at a young age for party politics, was introduced to the Council Leader at the time, George Brooker, as 'comrade Kevin'. For him, though, the historical bias towards Labour is a misreading. The Borough would actually be traditionally conservative in its resistance to change; the self-perception of its population as working class weighs more strongly than any political conviction.

Leading into the 2010 elections six former Labour seats were held by independent councillors who had previously defected from the main party. This makes the result of the elections, fifty-one out of fifty-one seats to Labour, even more dramatic. Even the long time local Labour councillors now running independently were ousted in favour of newcomers to the Borough and the party. In July 2010 there was a by-election for Goresbrook Ward for which ex-BNP councillor Richard Barnbrook ran and finished second. To this day the Assembly is still one hundred percent Labour. As Councillor Jeanne Alexander (Labour, Eastbury Ward) put it when I ran into her after the elections and asked whether it was strange not to have any opposition 'now we'll argue between us!' What she implied is that they would argue across the traditional Barking and Dagenham divide she pointed out in our previous interview (see Chapter 8). But not everyone shared the enthusiasm for the Labour clean sweep. As local activist Sheila Delaney explained, the lack of an opposition means a lack of accountability and the perhaps more prominent danger of the party slipping back into its pre-2006 complacency. For her it was this complacency that had led to the decline in support to Labour and the success of the BNP in the area.

> One of the reason that people were so...wasn't so much that they were radically racists is that they were rabidly fed up of how they perceived this patriarchal smug establishment. A lot of the people voted BNP partly because they just didn't like Labour at that time. Now, they like the BNP less but that doesn't mean that they like Labour more. If [the Labour councillors] go back to the same ways which is 'we know best' the resentment will become a cyclical thing. In four year's time they'll probably vote for the extreme Greens or something![898]

The eventual results of the 2010 elections do lend support to the interpretation of the 2006 vote as 'reactionary' rather than consciously far-right. Yet this overlooks the fact that for the overall vote in the Borough, the BNP did better than in 2006, albeit by a small margin and perhaps given their representation in thirty-four competitions rather than only thirteen.

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of the Assembly to 74%. Leading into the general elections of 6 May 2010, the Assembly of the LBBD was constituted of 31 Labour, 12 BNP, 2 Conservative, and 6 independent councillors.

[898] Sheila Delaney, INT20100517B.

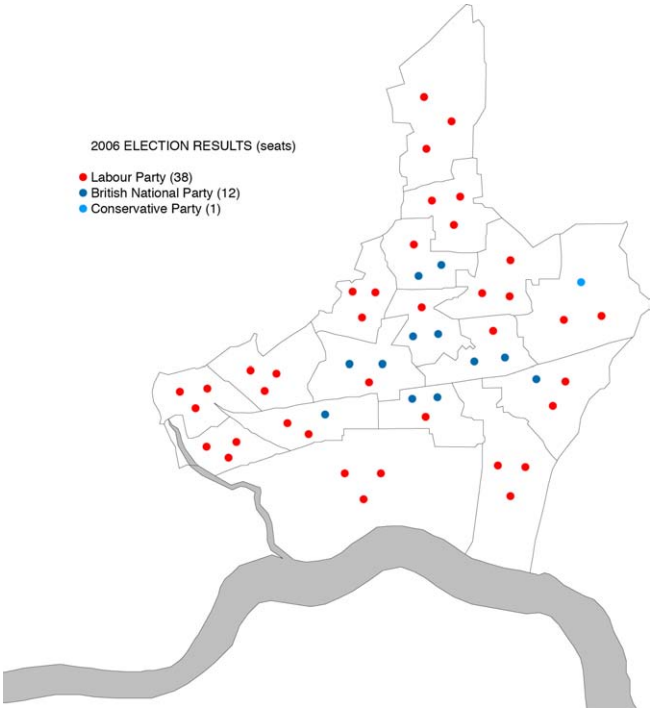

Figure 82. Map showing the distribution of Council seats by party, 2006 local elections.

In spatial terms the particular status of the town centre, its 'uneven geography'[899] must be pointed out against the rest of the Borough. The BNP council seats from the 2006 elections were mostly distributed along the low-density area of the Barking and Dagenham border (Figure 82). None were in the denser wards of the Barking Town Centre. Councillor Jeanne Alexander mentions that 'the BNP, although it's big in the area, has never had a foothold in the Town Centre. They're actually too scared to spend too long in the town centre.'[900] She continues by saying how the community of the Town Centre has traditionally been more mixed than other areas of the Borough. I was living in Barking in the weeks preceding the May 2010 elections and although other parties left their prospectuses in my mailbox I never received any literature from the BNP. I only heard of them canvassing the Town Centre area once.

The feeling that the Town Centre is an exception in the Borough is confirmed by the reaction of most people who visit from the outside. Overall, the impression of Barking supported in the media since the 2006 elections has been primarily negative. In some cases, informants visiting from other areas of London spoke of their pre-conceived impressions of Barking as a 'grimy and racist' place, in some cases even dangerous. In all cases the informants further reflect on how these impressions were misinformed and did not reflect what they actually encountered in the Borough. Without judging whether this indeed does not reflect the overall situation in the Borough, what is almost always the case is that the

[899] The Cities Programme (LSE).
[900] INT20100223.

experience of Barking and Dagenham, in the case of a visitor, is usually constrained to the area of the Town Centre, and more particularly the area between the train station and Abbey Green. This area is the most diverse and lively of the Borough and it is a surprise for some to find such diversity in a place they assumed to have a much more homogeneous population. What may have been confounding for major newspapers and public opinion is the presence of a far-right party in the projected multiculturism of London.

U. TOWN CENTRE MORPHOLOGY

The Barking Town Centre occupies a special position in the Borough. It is distinct in terms of morphology, density and diversity of both buildings and population. The Town Centre also includes historic Barking or 'Old Barking' as those residents who remember the area before the Second World War call it.

Figure 83. Barking in 1864 with 'Barking New Town' top centre. St Margaret's church is just below the word 'Barking' with East Street snaking up to the right, crossing the railroad at the recently constructed station before continuing into fields.

The Ordnance Survey map of 1864 (Figure 83) captures the town in the midst of major changes at the turn of the century. The main area of activity of the town is still along the Broadway in the area between the Curfew Tower and the Town Quay. Barking's public offices are still located in the historic Elizabethan Town Hall at the bottom of East Street (Figure 84). The map was drawn only ten years after the first Barking Station opened on

the new London Tilbury Southend Railway line.[901] The opening marked the start of Barking's move to the east, gradually abandoning the area of the Town Quay for the area of the train station. In the period between 1890 and 1910, the town would see massive investment in its civic facilities. A new town hall, library, fire station and public park would all be opened during that time. There would also be new residential neighbourhoods constructed further east, past the railroad, into what would be called 'New Barking'. Already the 1864 map shows an area north of the tracks called 'Barking New Town', which in fact is the only part of that area included in today's Town Centre limits. The area of the Town Centre west of the tracks is more or less the area of Old Barking (see also Appendix W).

In his 2009 lecture to the Barking and District Historical Society, Mark Watson stated that Old Barking in the 1930s was 'a bit dodgy'. I asked Joyce Petchey about that statement—Joyce had missed Mark's talk on purpose because, as she said, it would have made her 'so crossed'. 'What *did* he tell you?'[902] He had said that for a while Old Barking was left out and that is where most of the poverty was. 'Well you can say poverty but people were working. This is 1930s. They were all working at a job but didn't earn much. They were self sufficient.'[903] The area of New Barking Town and around Queen Street, as she further recalls, was where the 'people that made money' lived.

> They would come to posh St Margaret's church with their top hats and sit in what we called the jury boxes. The Hewitt family, the Saunders...[904]

Joyce's family moved to Upney Lane in New Barking in the early years of the twentieth century. The new residential neighbourhoods attracted the families with a bit more money that could afford a terrace house with its own garden. The residential areas of Old Barking primarily housed working class families who worked in the town centre's many factories. During those years Barking was actually at the forefront in terms of building social housing destined for working class tenants. The large residential area along King Edward Road, south east of the town centre, was opened in 1901. (This particular area would later be cleared as part of slum clearances to make way for the 1960s Gascoigne Estate.)

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[901] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'London Tilbury and Southend Railway: Local Studies Information Sheet No. 10' (London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 2008).
[902] Joyce Petchey, INT20091105.
[903] Joyce Petchey, INT20091105.
[904] INT20091105.

Figure 84. Barking public offices and court house, c1912. Source: Valence House

In the few years following the end of the Second World War nearly all of the historical fabric of 1864 had been cleared away. In 1926 the public offices building (Figure 84) was demolished. The building was built in 1567 and had served its function until the end of the nineteenth century, to be replaced by a new building in the middle of East Street (now the Magistrates Court). The area in front of the building had been Barking's traditional market square. The public offices was one of the first buildings to be pulled down in the Back Lane and Broadway area. In the years that followed, the rest of the buildings of the area were demolished including all factories and homes to the south of the Broadway (save for the Barge Aground Public House). This left a massive gap in the urban fabric between the river and north of the Broadway which was, after the war, turned into the Central Area Open Space (later renamed Abbey Green). The Town Quay, which for so long had been one of the most active places in town, was effectively isolated from modern Barking now re-centring itself on the train station and sprawling eastward.

V. MARKET

Barking had a Marks and Spencer's, you see.

Jean Brown[905]

Figure 85 Marks and Spencer on East Street, 1938. Source: Valence House

If any traumatic event is to define the decline of Barking as a relatively prosperous centre, then the closure of Marks and Spencer on East Street (Figure 85, closed in the mid 1990s) has to be the most likely candidate. During her speech for the 2009 ceremony for the Town Square, Barking MP Margaret Hodge recalled that when she 'first became MP for Barking and went around knocking on doors, the great complaint of everybody was that Marks and Spencer had just moved out of the Borough.'[906] Whether it is mentioned with irony or not, the closure repeatedly came back in interviews. The most interesting aspect is that it is often brought up following a question or comment on the identity of Barking as a town. Jennie Coombs, after speaking of Barking's struggling identity adds that '[the town] used to be quite an affluent place, you know: it had a Marks and Spencer's! People always talk about that!'[907] Jeremy Grint says that 'in a sense [Barking] did have an identity and it was a very sort of low key place. I mean at the time I came there was a Marks and Spencer in Barking Town Centre.'[908] The presence of this iconic British department store had been a source of pride for long term residents, meaning that in the continuous struggle for competitive advantage, Barking was indeed playing the game with its neighbours. As Dave Mansfield suggests, for older residents who have lived there for the at least thirty years, the presence of the store is synonymous with the affluence of Old Barking:

[905] INT20100218.
[906] AUD20090930.
[907] INT20100305B.
[908] INT20101104.

> They rue the day that we lost our Marks and Spencer's, they will rue the day when Barking was see, perhaps thirty or forty years ago, relatively upmarket.[909]

But it is rather unfair to state, as Margaret Hodge did in her speech, that the closure of the store marked the beginning of the Town Centre's decline. The closure of the shop is a symptom of a trend that had started much earlier with the overall decline of the manufacturing sector both locally and nationally.

Figure 86 Study of North East London shopping centres from an LBBD 1982 survey. The three largest circles are (from right to left): Romford, Ilford and East Ham. Barking is just right of East Ham.

Ever since easy access to other commercial centres has been possible, Barking has struggled to establish itself within the shopping network of East London. Reflecting on the subject, Ron and Joyce Petchey recall how even at the beginning of the twentieth century the centres of Ilford and Romford were more attractive: 'Poor Old Barking' was only 'the food place.'[910] People went out of town for clothes and upscale items. Joyce recalls how her family would still go to Romford even though the round-trip at the time would take a whole day. In 1982, when the LBBD produced its AAP survey of the Town Centre, the Barking Town Centre was put in relation to Ilford and Romford town centres, highlighting how little Barking had grown in terms of turnover in the past decade (Figure 86). It concluded that Barking had been growing at only half the rate of its 'competing larger centres,' including East Ham.[911] During public consultation of the AAP draft, the Borough of Newham objected to the proposed commercial development at Vicarage Field arguing that this would compete directly with East Ham Town Centre. It further objected to the addition of parking to Barking Town Centre since this 'would make Barking more attractive than East Ham.'[912] In the same report, the LBBD later stakes its claim by stating

[909] INT20100511. This sentiment was confirmed by four long time residents in separate interviews: Joyce and Ron Petchey, Margaret Nicholls and Ned from St Margaret's church.
[910] INT20091105.
[911] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'BTC AAP Report of Survey', p. 38.
[912] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Barking Town Centre Action Area Local Plan: Report on Public Consultation', p. 10.

that any such objection (from Newham or others) should be resisted and that no change is considered.

The Vicarage Field Shopping Centre opened in 1991. It has fifty-five retail spaces with nine unoccupied as of November 2010. Its largest space is rented by Asda, who the Vicarage Field website proudly claims is 'officially Britain's lowest price supermarket.' The building is devised along two levels, Station Parade (the upper level) whose entrance faces Barking Station and Ripple Walk (the lower level) whose entrance gives onto Ripple Road. The two levels are connected via a central interior courtyard under a glazed roof. There does not seem to have been a strong opposition to the centre by Town Centre traders at the time.[913] The principal point of contention was on the pedestrianisation of part of the Town Centre that happened during and after the centre's construction. According to local traders, as it was reported by local newspapers at the time, the difficult flow of traffic and lack of parking in the town centre were symptoms of planning decisions by an antagonistic Council (sitting in its 'Ivory Tower' as one shop owner claims) and the future causes of turning the Town Centre into a 'ghost town'.[914] In 1992, a newspaper article reported that there were about forty vacant shops in the Town Centre, and that traders warned of more shops closure. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the new centre in terms of movement and traffic is that it effectively creates, through its connected levels, a new 'street' in the Town Centre. This is not mentioned in any documents found, but is illustrated quite strongly by the 1999 Avery scheme for the new Town Square where the main axis of the town centre is drawn up between Vicarage Field and the Town Quay, leaving East Street to the side (Figure 87).

[913] The 1985 AAP Report of Public Consultation shows no objection made by any shop owner in the Town Centre with regards to either new commercial space at Vicarage Field or the proposed pedestrianisation of the Town Centre.

[914] See Lucia Blash, 'Town Centre Rebellion', *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 14 August 1991, p. 5; 'Town Centre Shops Close', *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 22 April 1992, p. 3; and Samuel Peeps, 'Moans and Groans from the People's Champion', *Barking and Dagenham Post*, 3 March 1993, p. 26.

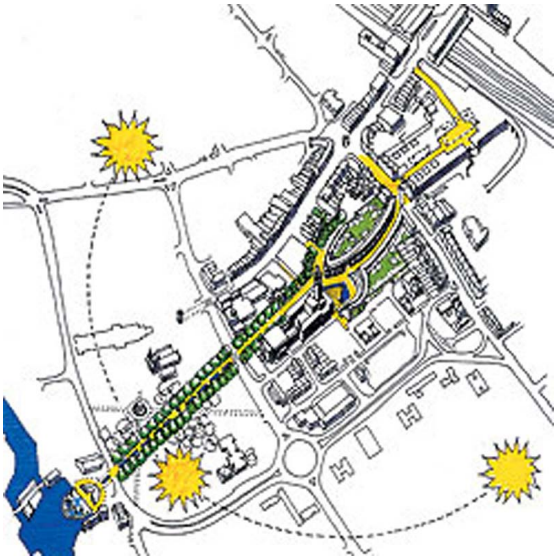

Figure 87. Drawing from Avery's scheme for the Town Square with the Vicarage Field Shopping Centre at the top right. Source: Avery

This new indoor street connects the Station with Ripple Road, bypassing the commercial area around Blake's Corner. As it is common with shopping centres in urban settings, the centre turns the street 'outside in' and becomes a significant actor in the competition for the footfall of consumers. This also has a significant impact on the public realm of the Town Centre with the shopping centre becoming an attractive climatised loitering area.[915]

It is unclear when and where Barking's street market on East Street came into existence. The 1982 survey makes no mention of this matter. As Linda Rhodes points out, after the swimming baths were demolished in the 1980s to make way for a car park, a market was held there sporadically with little success. 'It wasn't very successful because it wasn't really a place that people walked through.'[916] After the 1991 pedestrianisation of the area surrounding Blake's Corner the market may have occupied the new space on Ripple Road. Jennie Coombs mentioned in our interview that the traders had to be moved from Ripple Road because of the ELT plans to re-open the street to traffic—but this only affected the market in early 2009. The 1995 study of the town centre by URBED and Donaldson identifies the 'repositioning of the market in a single line along East Street, up to the bandstand' as a 'short term action' for regeneration.[917] At the same time, the LBBD's 1995 Unitary Development Framework (UDP) identifies the potential of on-street trading and markets for bringing vitality to town centres.[918] What is certain is that the market in its present form and administration was created around 2000-01. While I visited Barking, the

[915] Both Sheila Delaney and Verona Tucker commented on how fast the new centre's benches were appropriated by Sikh men (20100517B and INT20100420B).
[916] Linda Rhodes, INT20090716A.
[917] URBED, 'Barking Town Centre Regeneration Strategy: The Next Steps', 1995.
[918] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Unitary Development Plan (adopted Version)' (LBBD, 1995), chap. 3.

market ran four times a week and stretched between Blake's Corner and the bottom of East Street, as well as occupying the area of the future Market Square. The majority of traders deal in low quality consumer products with only one stall offering fresh produce. A mobile butcher van comes in twice a week (owned by a butcher who had recently closed his shop on East Street[919]). The Council positively stresses how the market reflects the multi-cultural society of the area.[920] In appearance the group of traders may approach a semblance of the average ethnographic composition of the centre (not the Borough as a whole). But the celebrated 'multi-culturalism' is taken with a grain of salt by some residents, like Verona Tucker: 'I thought the market was really going to be multi-cultural. I don't think it's a multi-cultural market! It's a rubbish market!'[921] Jennie Coombs recognises that the offer is on the lower end of retailing, but that it is what the 'current community' wants. Yet she anticipates that the changes in the Town Centre and the new people moving in will push retailers and market operators in a slightly different 'upscale' direction.[922]

After the station, the market area on East Street is by far the busiest area of the Town Centre, drawing up crowds every operating day. Sheila Delaney reflects on how the market has become an 'accidental gathering area' where people constantly bump into each other.[923] Another local resident, less enthusiastic about the activity, openly says that she fears for her safety in the market, that the area is rife with petty thieves and pickpockets.[924] What the Vicarage Field Shopping Centre had done to the street (turning it 'outside in'), pedestrian East Street on market days does the opposite and brings the activity back onto the street. It seems apparent that if we move inward from the London-scale competition between major retail centres and look within the Barking Town Centre, what is described as an entity, a 'major centre'[925], is actually far more fractured than could be otherwise thought. Vicarage Field creates an alternative commercial throughway in a town that perhaps does not need more than one high street. Temporary market stalls block views and access to established shop fronts. The future Market Square will make the current back alley a permanent place with better access, but it is doubtful it will change the dynamic of East Street as it is now. There is already tension (in 2010) between the new Town Square and the East Street market about the possibility of putting stalls in the Town Square (for further notes see chapters 8 and 9).

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[919] The same butcher was one of the main characters of Marc Isaacs' documentary *All White in Barking*.
[920] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Markets. Barking and Dagenham.', *London Borough of Barking and Dagenham*, 2010 <http://www.lbbd.gov.uk/3-info/shopping.html> [accessed 17 November 2010].
[921] INT20100420B.
[922] INT20100305B.
[923] INT20100517B.
[924] Rita, INT20091002C.
[925] Greater London Authority, 'The London Plan: Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London' (GLA, 2008). The London Plan identifies Barking as a 'major centre'. Ilford and Romford are both 'opportunity areas'

W. OLD BARKING

Every participant in the Town Square project I interviewed who came from outside Barking agreed that apart from a few disparate listed buildings, the area had very little heritage left. Indeed, in terms of cultural landmarks, the town has few buildings that stand out on their own. Out of Barking's rich industrial past there is only one listed building left, a simple stone granary at the Town Quay. Along the Roding and the Thames there are abandoned brown fields and factories. Perhaps Barking's most significant but also its most unrecognised landmarks are the various housing experiments that cover the majority of the Town Centre and the Borough. As Mark Brearley told me in our interview, Barking's identity is not inexistent but it is a 'battered identity': 'A lot of the identity of the place as people would understand it who have been there a long time has been lost.'[926]

In this sense the 1931 charter celebrations organised for the incorporation of Barking into an Essex municipal borough can be interpreted to mark two things or two foundation myths. First, they celebrate the expansion of the town and its emerging modern identity. But as a corollary they also mark the end of Old Barking, the events that defined its foundation and development, a last celebration before the Second World War and the dramatic changes that would follow.

Two events were planned in parallel. The first, a historical pageant, a 'huge theatrical event', was to recreate eleven scenes from Barking's past and involve hundreds of local volunteers mostly form community groups.[927] Local historian Richard Tames writes that the pageant was a means of 'promoting the Borough to outsiders and of involving newcomers to the area to foster a sense of identification with the community.'[928] The newcomers he mentions are the thousands of new residents recently moved to Barking's section of the Becontree Estate (still partly under construction at this point, see Appendix S). Some of the main recreations included the foundation and the dissolution of Barking Abbey (666 and 1539), the funeral of Bishop Erkenwald and a group of school children dressed as Vikings who were 'allowed to rampage' (to represent the destruction of the abbey by the Danes in 870). The events covered the period between 43 A.D. (Roman camp at Uphall) and 1746 (the Great Barking Fair) but no further.

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[926] INT20100727.
[927] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'The Barking Pageant, 1931: Local Studies Information Sheet No. 8' (LBBD, 2005).
[928] Richard Tames, *Barking Past* (London: Historical Publications, 2002), p. 113.

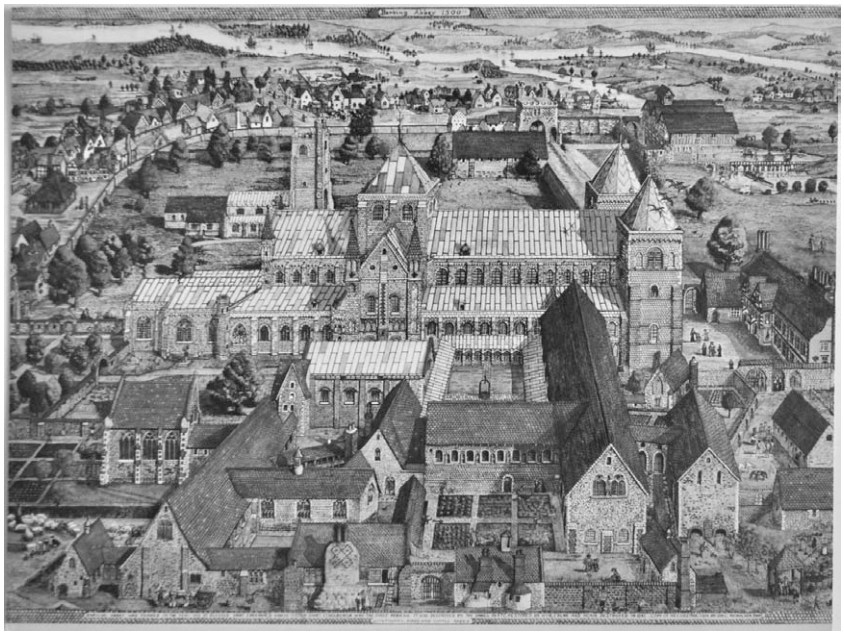

Figure 88. Barking Abbey as imagined in the 1500s from a postcard found at the BLC library. The Broadway is the road curving in the top left corner. The Thames can be seen in the distance and the Roding and Town Quay top right.

The story of Barking Abbey (Figure 88) is the town's foundation story. It is not surprising, therefore, that seven of the eleven scenes from the pageant were about it. The abbey was founded in 666 A.D. as a nunnery by Abbot Erkenwald (later Bishop of London). It stood in the area between the road that would become the Broadway and the river Roding. During the Danish invasion of the ninth century the abbey was destroyed and remained abandoned for another hundred years or so until King Edgar ordered its restoration at the end of the tenth century.[929] St Margaret's Church, still standing today, was built just outside the Abbey grounds in gradual steps between the thirteenth century and fifteenth century.[930] Over the centuries the town grew around the abbey. Its main entrance, where the Curfew Tower still stands at the intersection of East Street and the Broadway, became the centre of town. Barking's first town hall was built next to the Curfew Tower in the sixteenth century (see Appendix U). The abbey was eventually dissolved by Henry VIII in 1539 and demolished in the following years. All that remains of the buildings today are the ruins of its foundation walls.

[929] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'Sources for the History of Barking Abbey: Local Studies Information Sheet No. 2' (LBBD, 2007).
[930] 'History of St Margaret's', *St Margaret's Church Barking* <http://www.saintmargarets.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=55&Itemid=64> [accessed 3 December 2010].

Figure 89. The main stage of the Industrial Exhibition, October 1931. Source: Valence House

The second main event of the charter celebrations was the Barking Industrial Exhibition (Figure 89). The celebrations were, after all, organised during the great depression in the aftermath of the 1929 stock exchange crash. As local historian Sue Curtis writes:

> [The] industrial exhibition aimed to encourage manufacturers to establish new factories in the district. Barking was promoted as a good and convenient location for the construction of large industrial units. It was close to the capital city of England, with many vacant sites available at a reasonable cost. In addition, the area enjoyed excellent transport links, riverside sites, low power costs and a nearby workforce on the new Becontree Estate.[931]

The coming of the railway through town in the mid-nineteenth-century killed off what remained of Barking's once thriving fishing industry. At one point, the town was considered to be one of the principal fisheries centres of the country. The arrival of the railway meant that boats could unload their catches in towns further down river that were then sent to London by train. With the decline of its fishing industry, the Barking industrial sector turned to manufacturing. By the time of the Industrial Exhibition, the area of the town between the station and the Roding was densely packed with factories (Figure 90). Some industries even being practiced in private homes. As a lady from 'Old Barking' recalls: 'In those homes they would have big things going of pickles. I'm sure the vinegar killed any germs of whatever! [laughs] And you could see them of course because people going through Barking had yellow hands.'[932] She continues by saying that you could actually identify where everybody was working because each would come home in their overalls. This intense industrial activity in the centre was also emphasised by Joyce and Ron Petchey who, during one of our interviews, systematically identified each shop and factory they

[931] Sue Curtis, *Barking: a History* (Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 2006), pp. 104–5.
[932] Verona Tucker, INT20100420B.

could remember along Abbey Road, the Broadway, East Street, and North Street. During the 1930s the area now known as Abbey Green was also covered over with factories.

Figure 90. Barking Town Centre looking north west, 1933. The Town Quay is bottom left. Source: Valence House

With the advent of the depression and the sudden expansion of its population, Barking looked to strengthen its position as a manufacturing centre while emphasising its proximity to London. It did this in the wake of one of the most significant moment in the area's industrial history. In 1924 the Ford Motor Company bought land in Dagenham and in 1929 started the construction of a manufacturing plant that would open in 1931.[933] This decision would contribute largely to the definition of the area and ironically, while the pageant tried to 'foster a sense of identification with the community' for newcomers, Ford may have had more to do with the creation of a new identity for the region than the theatrical recreations of local historical events. As we can see from historical photos, the factory was built in what looks like relative isolation along the Thames (Figure 91). Although the Becontree Estate was being constructed, the area of the plant fell into a no man's land between Barking and Dagenham.[934]

[933] London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, 'The Ford Motor Company, Dagenham: Local Studies Information Sheet No. 1' (LBBD, 2010).
[934] See also Appendix S.

Figure 91. The Ford Motor Company's new factory on the bank of the Thames, Dagenham, 1930. Source: Valence House

Interestingly enough, the 'competitive advantages' of the region (access to the river, railway connections, proximity to London, available workforce, etc.) are to this day what defines the drive for regeneration in the area.[935] If in 1996 URBED argued to the LBBD that they should seek residential-led development, it would seem that the same could be said of the LCC's decision to build the Becontree Estate: build homes for the working class and the factories will follow. Strangely enough though, in the beginning the LCC openly refused to house Ford workers at the Becontree Estate (even those forced to move from Manchester).[936] It sought a mixed community and would avoid a single class community at all costs. As Robert K. Home writes: 'the LCC, through a paternalistic management style, sought to inculcate in its tenants new social values, training them into the life-style of an aspiring lower middle-class.'[937] For him, the Becontree represents a massive experiment in social engineering. Of course in the end the pressures of the area were too much and the Becontree Estate became exactly what the LCC had tried to avoid, a fairly homogeneous community of working class families working in the area's industrial sector.

[935] Evident in my interview with Peter Andrews who supported the potential for Barking and Dagenham to become key areas in terms of transport logistics (INT20100726).
[936] Tames, p. 108.
[937] Home, p. 47.

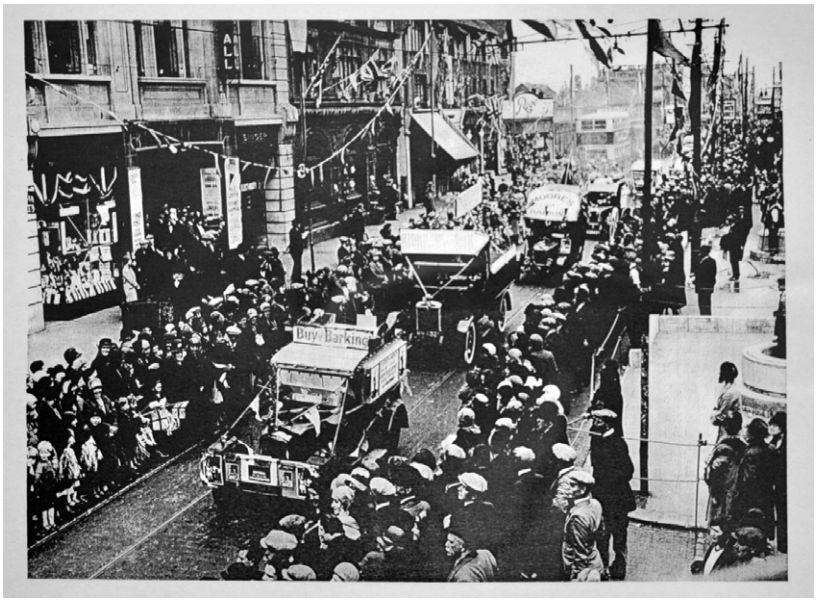

Figure 92. Procession marking the end of the 1931 charter celebrations, East Street. Source: Valence House

Both charter celebrations events took place in Barking Park. Opened in 1898, it was part of the wave of civic investment in the Town Centre at the end of the nineteenth century. For a long time this was the main open space of the thriving Victorian town, at least until the Central Area Open Space (now Abbey Green) was created in the early 1970s. On the final day of the celebrations a procession passed along a crowded East Street (Figure 92) marking the end of a pivotal moment in Barking's history; Old Barking would be no more. Every celebration of rebirth is also a commemoration for things passing…

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